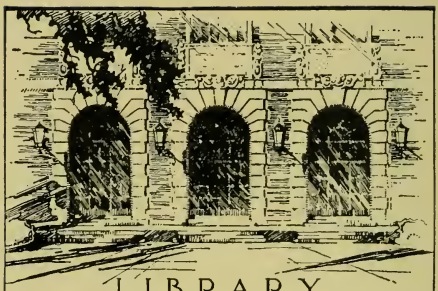

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WILLOUGHBY;

OR

REFORMATION.

THE INFLUENCE

OF

RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE DECISION," "CAROLINE ORMSBY,"

"VILLAGE COUNSEL," &c. &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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WILLOUGHBY.

CHAPTER I.

For two succeeding years Willoughby and Ellinor had re-assumed their usual habits of life; but they soon began to feel the effects of thoughtless extravagance; and all the money that Ellinor had in her own power was sacrificed to Willoughby's plausible persuasions.

And now the birth of a girl gave a new turn to Ellinor's ideas: she seemed romanticly to shut out the world and all society; the nursery became her home, her only resting place; the house, nay almost the town, was ransacked for conveniences and comforts for the little unconscious stranger; and Willoughby vainly pleaded or remonstrated against such unnecessary arrangements and slavery. In answer to the kindest arguments, he was reproached with unfeeling forgetfulness of the loss of their first

child; and the casual cry of infancy would ever take her from his side, either at meals, or when she had half consented to receive an expected guest at his table. Her dress was neglected, her accomplishments never resorted to, and the rapid increase of her figure often gave rise to Willoughby's impatient remarks and anticipations of a yet more unbecoming increase of her once beautiful form. The reign of admiration was indeed over; for the stable foundation of a well-regulated mind had never been the security of their mutual passion. We have seen Ellinor capricious in her attachments, unmindful of the purity of her heart's first vows of affection, disregarding the ties of parental obedience, and risking her happiness solely on the exterior captivations of a new and flattering lover. We have seen Willoughby the slave of beauty, abusing the rites of hospitality and the claims of a prior attachment; passion without esteem, enjoying only the semblance of domestic comfort, and contrasting his own ill-appointed establishment with the order and regularity of others.

But had Ellinor been commonly consistent in conduct, and instead of resenting what she conceived to be unpardonable neglect; had she re-

ceived him with smiles instead of reproaches, when the hour of hilarity had tempted him to play the truant; had she endeavoured to make his own home a scene of comfort, and not driven him abroad to escape childish complaints, or violence, or tears; a few more years had not brought with them that desolation of happiness which too fatally spread around the most direful effects.

Ellinor soon became weary of the sameness of nursery scenes. The child was nearly a twelvemonth old, beautiful and healthy as every care and attention would admit of. Willoughby was at first much disappointed at the birth of a girl. To replace his lost boy had been his earnest hope and wish; but the peculiar loveliness of the present infant began to interest his feelings, when he had time to think of the ties which should have bound him to domestic life.

Ellinor now expected him to be punctual in his attendance on her engagements, and to devote his care and time to vary her pursuits, as in the early days of wedded life; and when she experienced daily disappointments—when, to increase her heart-felt chagrin, the pang of jealousy was added to her store of ills—she sunk for a time into the depth of despair, ac-

cused Providence of awarding her such a fate, and with mournful and unceasing reproaches ever received and parted from her once adoring husband. She wrote to Elizabeth in all the rhapsody of grief and despair—" avowed that nothing but a separation could give her peace; that to live to witness such unprovoked neglect, to be assured that he had become a faithless husband, to pass her solitary hours without one hope or wish for the future, was a species of existence she neither could nor would endure."

She also repeatedly wrote to Miss Harrington, and from her derived but little comfort: wholly engrossed with her own concerns, entangled by the written promise she had given Mr. Sedley, who now and then wrote to her, still imposing the strictest secrecy, Miss Harrington's interest in the adored friend of her heart had rapidly decreased; and an elderly baronet of large fortune paying her every marked attention, induced her to refuse Ellinor's oft repeated invitation to town, and to weary Sedley with the request to return her imprudent promise. Sedley had his views for thus keeping her in suspense: his intimacy with Willoughby unfortunately proved the cause of many vices and follies; and without tracing the progressive

steps which led Willoughby to the verge of destruction, another twelvemonth opened with absolute ruin to his health, his peace, and his fortune.

Mrs. M. from whose arts Willoughby had formerly escaped, had become the chere amie of Sedley: gaming and every species of dissipation were tolerated within the dwelling of this unprincipled woman; and by sure but slow gradations, Sedley had led and inured Willoughby to ruinous and disgraceful scenes. Through inebriation, Willoughby became the passive tool of his wary and more experienced companions; and the few moments of intercourse with Ellinor generally ended in reproaches and mutual accusation. Still she was ignorant of the extent of his vicious conduct; and sometimes the threat of acquainting her father with the undeserved misery she endured, drew from Willoughby the promise of reformation.

The nearest friends and relations of erring and misguided man, are, generally speaking, the least acquainted with his vices or his follies; withdrawn from their circle, he seeks by deception to lull them into a fancied security of his peace and well-doing. Hence, although letters

and occasional visits from his estimable relatives and friend in the country had occurred, the darkest shades in Willoughby's conduct escaped their notice: they saw with real concern that all was not as it should be; that Ellinor's gloomy complaints and Willoughby's gaiety little assimilated; that extravagance was making large inroads in their domestic establishment; that want of prudence, good-humour, and stability of character, were weakening the ties of married life; and that the blessing of a lovely infant was frequently more a source of contention than happiness. Unfortunately, for the last six months, a variety of circumstances had prevented even their limited intercourse; but each party had sufficient conviction of the contrasted pursuits and ideas of happiness which interested the minds of Willoughby and Ellinor; and the vain wish, that rational society and domestic enjoyments could be preferable, often disturbed the serenity of a mother's and a sister's feelings.

To the mind of benevolence, there cannot perhaps be a more gratifying view than domestic life well ordered; where superiors endeavour to diffuse joy and comfort to all around, where a true sense of religion gives correctness

to conduct as well as to precept, and where the obedience of dependents is the result of commands dictated by consideration and reason.

The parsonage, the cottage, and the wider domain of the Vincents, practically and daily exemplified this pleasing theory. Mr. Donavan's active benevolence, and the varied duties of his profession, afforded such useful and honourable employment to his mind, that he knew not the vacuum of an idle hour; and still believing the impossibility of loving another object as he had loved Matilda, he derived his most peaceful moments in contemplating their re-union in an eternity of bliss, and in imagining that her pure and beatified spirit was now the invisible witness of his thoughts and actions. Her child was his present consolation and his future hope. Mrs. Coventry's maternal care was amply rewarded by the health and welfare of the boy; and she often declared, how impossible she had thought it to love the young Lord Linden as well as she did her own grand-daughter. They were truly a lovely little pair; and when some one casually called Elizabeth's child Lord Linden's pretty wife, Donavan thoughtfully replied, "Stranger things have happened."

Elizabeth herself had already begun her

system of education. With spirits sportive as innocence and health could inspire, a word or a look could render both the children docile and obedient, by her having gained an important ascendancy over their infant minds. She deemed a child's early obedience to earthly parents and instructors the best preparation for a cheerful obedience to an almighty Father; and, assisted by Mr. Donavan in her daily task, she humbly anticipated that time would eventually "fix each generous purpose in the breast of childhood." By method, and a proper estimate of time, her increased duties never interfered with her first formed plans of useful charity. The village school had flourished abundantly—occasional superintendance, and order, and regularity, combined to afford the children every expected benefit. The exterior of all the adjacent cottages bespoke the comfort within: the flowers bloomed, the cow gave health and nutriment; and those cottagers who by merit and industry were enjoying the produce of a little farm, were ever punctual tenants, assured of the indulgence and assistance of their kind employers and benefactors in any trying hour of adversity. The asylum for the aged poor had proved a most important blessing to many; tottering age and

second childhood had been "warmed and filled;" and the "blessing of many, that had been ready to perish," was feebly but devoutly offered at the throne of Heaven for the charitable founders of each lowly tenement.

Unquestionably, there are three or four species of charity so useful in their extent, so gratifying in their practice, that an indifferent or new observer of this world's proceedings might often be lost in the conjecture, that creatures formed for immortality should waste their existence in disgraceful pursuits, rather than reduce their practice of a professional religion to the endeavour to follow His steps "who went about doing good."

Would the wealthy timely reflect, that the day-dream of worldly enjoyment must have an end; would they once taste of the purity and lasting satisfaction, untainted by presumption, which arise from habitual benevolence; justice and generosity would go hand in hand, and the great blessing of individual reformation might ultimately disseminate prosperity and peace.

CHAPTER II.

Willoughby had progressively yielded to every temptation that wary and assiduous companions could throw in his way: inebriety led to gaming and dangerous connections; and he was at length so encompassed with debts necessarily attendant on his way of life, that he had more than once seriously thought of leaving the kingdom. One shadow of relief he yet grasped at: Ellinor had jewels—on the terms they now were, he encouraged little hope that she would at once yield to his entreaties. How lately the time, but a few short years since, a word or a look could have influenced her to every generous action; when he himself would have scorned to take any undue advantage of her unbounded liberality. Now, so despotic were his pecuniary embarrassments, so hushed were the pleadings of conscience, that to satisfy the extravagant demands of folly, he must stoop to meanness—he must dissemble with a wife whom he had past redemption injured. To follow him through all the gradations of libertinism were a useless

and disgusting task. His person and agreeable manners had attracted a frail but fashionable relative of Mrs. M's. Every allurement that experienced beauty could practise, fatally succeeded in estranging Willoughby from rectitude and honour; and fascinated by the variety of an artful but intriguing mind, home and Ellinor became more insipid and distasteful; and endeavouring to silence the reproaches of an accusing conscience, he was daily plunging into deeper ruin and distress.

After a brouillerie with the artful and unprincipled Julia, a paroxysm of wretchedness and despondency had suggested the idea of possessing Ellinor's jewels: he knew all must soon be over; even concealment from Mr. Onslow in a short time would be useless; but ere he embraced the final resolution to leave the kingdom, it was necessary to ensure the means of doing it with success.

Dispirited, and really ill in health, he sought his once respectable dwelling; and on ascending the stairs he met his child in the nurse's arms, lisping the first prattle of infancy. Nature throbbed in his bosom—and the nurse's hopes, "that he thought Miss grown and improved, that she had first taught her to call

Papa," adding, "See, Sir, how Miss Ellinor seems to know you," made him precipitately rush into the library; and relieved by a softer indulgence of his feelings, he determined to see Ellinor, and brave the worst immediately. After removing a few papers from his bureau, and securing them in his letter-case, he went into the room which Ellinor had been chiefly accustomed to occupy of a morning. He found her half reclining on a sofa—her dress very apparently neglected, which, with the screaming of the petted child, and barking of her favourite dog, rendered Willoughby for some moments an unobserved spectator of the scene.

"You come in so silently, Willoughby—I declare you have quite frightened me."

"One kiss of the child—and now pray send her away, and quiet that noisy animal. Ellinor, I wish to speak to you seriously."

"The unexpected favour of being spoken to at all, is really a wonderful event."

"Ellinor, I am ill in mind and body."

"And so you are come home to be nursed!"

"I own I have been a great stranger of late."

"Oh, Willoughby! do I deserve such neglect as I experience? But I will not bear it long. Bills are pouring in from every quarter—and I

can scarcely gain credit for a loaf of bread to feed your child with. My father shall know all my miseries. I had a letter from him yesterday; and I am expecting to see Mr. Harcourt very soon—Mr. Harcourt, who will see me righted—and with him, perhaps, poor Edward Onslow, who is just arrived in this country. Had I married him——"

"Cease, Ellinor, such indelicate and useless recrimination. We may both have been wrong; and I am about to lay before you a plan which may be the means of our mutual relief."

"You know, Willoughby, I am always reasonable. Give up that deceitful friend, Sedley; for he has indeed deceived poor Louisa Harrington." And here she was proceeding to narrate the substance of her late letters, and her repentance that she had ever consented to keep their attachment secret, when Willoughby, pressing his hand on his forehead, exclaimed, "Oh drive me not to distraction—cease unnecessary recitals, and listen to your ruined husband."

"I thought it would come to this at last. The company you have kept had better now console and relieve you; for if you mean pecu-

niary ruin, you well know you have long been master of every shilling I had in my power."

"Unfeeling woman!" But recollecting himself, he said, "It is too true, Ellinor."

"Why don't you apply to the rich Vincents? Elizabeth can preach about charity; and all there are such pattern characters, that——"

"Patience! But hear me, Ellinor, and perhaps for the last time." Having gained some degree of calmness, he endeavoured to work upon her feelings, palliating his own conduct, assured she knew not the extent of her injuries, and added, "To save us all from disgrace, to save your father the pain of witnessing our miseries, entrust me with those valuable jewels in your possession."

"No, never, Willoughby; I gave my father a sacred promise never to part with them—they were my mother's, he said; and—but, Willoughby, what is the matter with you?" Her screams brought him to himself; and he had just the power of arresting her hand from pulling the bell, and faintly exclaimed—

"Ellinor, we shall be exposed soon enough. If you are resolved to withhold the jewels—if you are resolved to acquaint your father with

my late desertion of you, through the interference of Mr. Harcourt—why, be it so. I seek not to intimidate you at what may be my future fate; but, if repentance should ever assail your mind, remember it is yourself alone that has doomed us to meet no more."

He left the room; but instantly returning, he said, "Ellinor, I give you one hour to meditate on my request and your refusal. I have to transact a little business at a neighbouring coffee-house: be you decisive, as I will be punctual." A flood of tears came opportunely to Ellinor's relief; and the distress of her once-adored Willoughby began to soften the asperity of her feelings. Besides, he had, though unintentionally, alarmed her with fearful apprehensions of the future. Her father might remain ignorant of the destination of the jewels; and, in the usual inconsistency of her mind, she thought how dreadful it would be to meet Edward Onslow as a deserted and afflicted wife; and recollecting how often in the fictitious scenes she had perused, that a reformed husband became a most interesting character, she determined to look at the jewels, and endeavour to persuade herself heroically to part with them. Her want of *mind*, of those feelings

which spring from either fortitude or Christian commiseration, generally caused Ellinor to act from the impulse of the moment, not from principle, founded on higher motives and proper deliberation: she therefore, taking the keys of the cabinet, instantly sought the chamber which contained the long-neglected treasure. With childish fancy she even tried on the transparent necklace, and apostrophised to every separate ornament on the happiness she had only a few years back enjoyed, when adorned by such brilliant gems—when her face, her figure, her dancing, and other accomplishments, were the theme of an admiring crowd. "Alas! Willoughby need not be afraid of my waltzing now!" she exclaimed, as she almost unconsciously surveyed her form in an opposite mirror. "But ah!" she continued, "if I think of what I have suffered—I, who never gave any reason for neglect—I shall so think of Willoughby as he deserves, that these dear diamonds will be again replaced in their long hiding place." Then hurrying through the library, her foot came in contact with a folded paper, which, as she carelessly picked up, she discovered was a letter addressed to Willoughby, the direction in a beautiful female hand-writing. Bursting with

curiosity, Ellinor locked her own dressing-room door; and seeing the signature of "Your fondly-attached Julia," breathless with impatience she perused the whole letter, and was instantly aroused to the rage and indignation of well-grounded jealousy. The letter was penned in all the extravagance of passion—in all the apparent fondness of deluded and deluding woman—and ended with tender complaints, as they were the world to one another, that other ties and avocations should engross the time of her adored Willoughby.

Ellinor had suspected the faith of Willoughby; but she could not have credited, but from ocular demonstration, that a permanent and serious connection had been the cause of his neglect of home.

With wonderful calmness she secured in safety the gems which sparkled in her hand, saying, "No; they shall never shine on the brow of infamy. I will return to my father! What misery can equal mine! I will overwhelm this guilty man with reproaches." And working herself up to the highest pitch of indignant feelings, she awaited in trembling solicitude the promised return of her husband.

When Willoughby took from his bureau the

parcel of letters, lest they should hereafter fall into other hands, scarcely knowing on what to resolve, and doubting Ellinor's compliance with his request, this unfortunate paper fell unseen to the ground; great therefore was his surprise, on meeting her again, to find she had reason for the torrent of reproaches that issued from her lips. He stood the image of despair, neither avowing nor contradicting the accusations she loaded him with. Hysterical sobs at length impeded Ellinor's utterance; and she recovered only to declare "she would never live with him again—she would go to her father."

In all cases of matrimonial discord, even in this extreme and criminal one, how much violence defeats its own purpose! how many invectives and reproaches are uttered which ultimately add to the misery of each contending party! It may with truth be affirmed, that gentleness and forbearance have restored many a repentant husband to home and happiness, while a contrary conduct has widened the breach, and converted a temporary estrangement into a lasting separation!

"And this, Ellinor, is your final determination! You will not bestow on a ruined husband the means of future subsistence."

"Had I not been scorned, insulted, forsaken, for the despicable writer of this letter, the jewels had been yours, Sir; but fly to the wretch who has seduced you from an innocent wife, and now find your comfort there. I defy you to place any stigma on my conduct."

"Stop, Ellinor, nor drive me to distraction. This is not an hour to have your own merits listened to; but, before we part, let me ask, and allow your own conscience to answer, whether if, since the first twelvemonths of our marriage, you have ever endeavoured to make home comfortable. Had you received me with smiles on any unforeseen absence—had order and regularity pervaded our household—had I met with those little indulgences so congenial to the sometime harassed mind of man—had you soothed instead of irritated my feelings by contradiction, when I requested the exertion of your superior musical powers—in short, had you ever acted like a woman of sense and feeling, our present wretchedness might have been spared."

"And thus, coward-like, you are throwing the whole blame on me."

"No, Ellinor; I am beyond redemption

guilty. It may be coward-like to linger, to argue, or to recriminate. I must away."

"Away to Julia, I suppose. Oh, Willoughby, that it should ever come to this!"

"Ellinor! But I will be calm—that it should ever come to this, indeed. Farewell." And he immediately rushed out of the house.

Whilst resentment was the predominant feeling of Ellinor's mind, self was the only subject of her attention. That she should have been slighted, and condemned to pass such wretched and solitary hours, for the sake of a wicked and unprincipled woman; that she, who had given up all former prospects, and all the fortune she had ever possessed, for the sake of one who had not a shilling in the world—for one whose ingratitude and deceptive conduct would not admit of an excuse—nerved her mind with more than usual strength; and mentally avowing that her injuries were past redress, she determined never to live with Willoughby again, but to throw herself on the mercy of her father. Then recollecting how he at first had opposed the union, how he had warned her of the consequences that might ensue from instability of mind and hasty predilection, and that only

through Mr. Harcourt's interference the marriage had taken place, she was overwhelmed with despair, and wept in all the bitterness of disappointment and sorrow. "Still," she repeated, "I will never live with Willoughby again. It is too true, as Miss Harrington once told me, a wife's reign over the heart of her husband is but short."

And then again she resolved to go to her father, and heroically brave his reproaches and Mr. Harcourt's pity; "for there I can have my dear Louisa with me, and on the bosom of friendship repose my grief. Poor Mrs. Randall too! I shall see her; and my sufferings, my undeserved sufferings, will be alleviated. When Willoughby comes back, he shall know all my resolutions."

Ellinor endeavoured to write to her father—the unsteady pen often fell from her hand, and resentful feelings and floods of tears alternately shook her frame, and brought on the real feelings of indisposition. After a weeping and restless night, she again essayed to address Mr. Onslow; and just as she had worked herself up to the highest pitch of resentment in endeavouring to detail to him her wretched and for-

lorn situation, a knock at the door aroused her to the determination (not doubting it was Willoughby) to receive him with dignified resentment, and proper self-possession and composure.

But the room-door opened, and Mr. Harcourt entered with a cheerful and greeting countenance; when, on looking at her, and observing the great discomfort of all around, he started and paused, and could only articulate, "What am I to think, Ellinor? Mrs. Coventry, your husband, your child, or his family—has any thing happened to either?"

Ellinor, taken by surprise in being thus addressed by Mr. Harcourt, for some time vainly endeavoured to speak with any degree of precision; but when she thought Mr. Harcourt could comprehend her forlorn and wretched situation, she put the letter just written to Mr. Onslow in his hand, and paced the room in restless agitation. Mr. Harcourt led her to a seat; and after some necessary inquiries, he said—

"I have known you from a child, Ellinor; and, as your father's oldest friend, judge what are my feelings to see you a prey to despondency and grief."

"You should rather say, Sir, a prey to the

ill-usage and neglect of an unprincipled husband. Never, sure, were wrongs like mine. I, that ever conducted myself——"

"I must interrupt you, Ellinor, to remark, that this is not the moment to enumerate your own virtues. There are generally faults on both sides where parties disagree. Your husband, by progressive steps, is led to the brink of ruin. Home may not have been always made pleasant to him. You may not have understood his temper sufficiently; and——but I will not take a retrospect of the past—it is more the province of friendship to warn you of the future. You are the wife of Willoughby Coventry; nor can a husband's misdemeanors justify your wish for a separation, till every means have been tried to bring him back to rectitude and reason."

"What! share his attentions with profligacy and vice? Sue for a return of his long-lost regard, and meanly receive him when tired of the ingratitude of the world! No, Mr. Harcourt—never!"

"I wish I knew in what language best to convince you, that to return good for evil is the command of God, and therefore a positive duty. Your husband is at present a weak and erring mortal—how know you what gentleness and for-

bearance might accomplish? for, believe me, it is far from my intention to persuade you to live with him again, if he still pursues the path of vice, and neglects you for unworthy connections."

"While I am convinced nothing can reclaim him, I am resolved——"

"Have you ever tried to reclaim him, Ellinor?"

"Long ago I have given up the hope. Besides, we are every way ruined—in fortune, in peace, in every thing!"

"I will see your husband, my dear, and know the extent of this ruinous business. He has been led astray; but much may yet be done. A wife who loves her husband, I should rather say who has vowed to love him, and never to forsake him, most criminally gives up her share of the covenant, who does not first endeavour to bring back the mistaken prodigal, and by every gentle means to lure him again to happiness and home, before she deserts him—before she leaves him to a fate which may consign him to misery both here and hereafter."

"My dear Sir, I can only say I boast of no such mighty power. Willoughby is young—and perhaps there is time enough to think of

another world when he has surmounted the difficulties of this. I have heard my father say, we must all take our chance of another world; so do not terrify my senses about what may or may not be true. But pray take me to my father; you can best prepare him for all this sad business."

"You have a child, Ellinor."

"A child, beggared by the conduct of her father—dear little soul, she must accompany me."

"Your father is not fond of children. A boy, indeed, might have been joyfully received; but——"

"Oh! madden not my brain, dear Mr. Harcourt, by starting imaginary objections. Here I must starve, or beg my own bread. In my father's house, every luxury and comfort awaits me."

"Only consent to wait a few days, that I may see your husband—that I may prepare Mr. Onslow for the miserable tale, and for your reception. You are aware, I suppose, that Edward Onslow is now with him."

"I knew he was in this country; and he has too much kindness and delicacy to reflect upon a wretched outcast. Oh! had I married him—"

"Forbear, Ellinor, to give utterance to such senseless regrets. Excuse my plain dealing; but they neither become your situation, nor are founded in reason. Recollect, what is past cannot be recalled. You have yet to learn that Edward Onslow is married, and only left America on urgent business; of course, he is anxious to return to home and happiness, and will doubtless regard you as a sister. We know his worth—command your own feelings, nor fear one unpleasant remark from him."

"Edward Onslow married!" Ellinor could only articulate: and Mr. Harcourt vainly endeavoured to tranquillize her mind, and persuade her to take time for the consideration of future plans. He could not help observing, that the same selfishness of character, the same love of ease and the luxuries of life, which had ever distinguished her, now influenced her mind and feelings; and the contrast of Mr. Onslow's hospitable dwelling with her own deserted house, made her resolve to brave all unpleasant feelings, and to leave Willoughby to his deservedly-wretched fate. As Mr. Harcourt was more and more convinced there was no mind to work upon; no consistency of principle on which her resolutions and feelings were founded; no

higher source whence she could derive consolation than the wish of variety, and to fly from the more immediate scene of suffering; he listened in silence to her childish lamentations, and gave up the hope of bringing her to any reasonable arrangement. The fallacy of Mr. Onslow's opinions on the important subject of education, and the freedom of his religious sentiments, could not fail to occur, while he marked the instability of Ellinor's character, and her total ignorance of those sacred truths by which Christianity supports the mind under the pressure of any trial or affliction.

Mr. Harcourt inquired after the Vincents, and Mrs. Coventry. Ellinor replied, "Rest assured, my dear Sir, that they will find excuses for Willoughby's conduct. They have often given me very broad hints in regard to management and economy: no doubt, in their eyes, I shall be the greater culprit."

Mr. Harcourt only answered, "How much I pity Mrs. Coventry!"

At length it was arranged that Mr. Harcourt should set off that night by the mail, and prepare Mr. Onslow for the perusal of Ellinor's letter; and return to town, in order to accompany her into Somersetshire, she not doubting

that his embassy would prove a successful one. During Mr. Harcourt's absence, as Willoughby ceased to molest her, she concluded that the unworthy connection he had entered into absorbed his whole time and attention, and congratulated herself that she had been so resolute in her conference with Mr. Harcourt.

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Donavan, from some unexpected parochial business, was obliged to defer his intended journey to town, and he received the following incoherent lines from his wretched and deluded friend:

"Ere this paper can reach you, Donavan, I trust I shall be hourly increasing our distance, and far from every human eye that can know and witness the heart-rending pangs I experience. A false friend and unstable resolutions have reduced me to all that is immoral and sinful. I am a wretch, beyond redemption ruined, I am about to seek under another clime relief from the ruin with which I am surrounded. But, Donavan, shall I find relief? what can minister 'to a mind diseased?' What can restore that peace dependant on an approving conscience? Avaunt, reflection! whilst sanity is vouchsafed, I must state facts, not lose myself in endless retrospection of the vices which have undone me.

" When you see Ellinor, and I know your promptitude in all that concerns your lost and wretched friend, she will tell you of our last eventful interview. I forbear, at such an hour as this, all recrimination of her conduct. Her wrongs were great—how noble had been her forbearance! Mr. Onslow will doubtless receive his daughter, and with him, she will be surrounded by affluence and comforts; she will not long remember her wretched husband. Mr. Onslow will execrate my memory, and—but no more of them. Donavan, I have a child, should I not live to return, be it your care to supplicate, that her mind may be better stored than her poor mother's is, I mean stored with religious knowledge. My earnest wishes on this head may, I am well aware, be never realized, yet should she be left an orphan, place her in the arms of my mother!

" I shudder to repeat the word ' my mother.' I have also a sister, Donavan, dear to me as the vital blood that sustains my drooping frame—for worlds I could not write to them—break the intelligence of my absence as gently as possible. They must consider me as dead, removed from a world I have loved

too well; and tell my still revered mother, that her early precepts are at this instant so remembered, and her unshaken faith of a future state so pervades my mind, that I dare not risk the penalty of endless perdition by any rash act, but that I will live to suffer, perhaps live to repent.

"Oh, Donavan! did not my conscience tell me there can be no mercy for one who has sinned so often against conviction as I have done! What would I say, you and I can never meet again. Well, be it so. Think you that my father's shade can witness his son's degradation? I once knelt upon his coffin, and vowed to live only for the sake of an afflicted mother and sister! I thought the hour of retribution had then arrived!

"You will learn too soon the extent of my follies—debts, innumerable debts. Oh! spare me the disgraceful catalogue.

"I am sometimes prone to ask, why we are formed the creatures of passion, the slaves of temptation—when had the blessing of a resolute mind been vouchsafed, the hour of repentance could never have been necessary, and the sufferings of man had lost their bitterness. I

linger to say, adieu, adieu! and perhaps for ever!

" All your conjectures in regard to my future plans must be fruitless, for alas! I know not myself what they may be! Without friends, fortune, or reputation, I am about to leave my native land, an outcast of society, and with feelings too sensitive and acute, to bear with patience the sneer of the profligate, or the pity of the wise and prudent, I may ere long sink into the grave, perhaps ' forgetting and forgotten.' I say perhaps, for even I, the victim of sceptical example, and sceptical opinions, dare not encourage the dreadful thought of ' an annihilating God!' Time wears; my last thoughts on this side of the grave will be on my poor mother; neither will you, my dear and earliest friend, ever be forgotten. You cannot palliate my conduct to her, to the Vincents, or to yourself. Elizabeth will weep for me, but she will solace my mother's grief. Oh! what could I not write to warn the unthinking, to alarm the profligate! This hour almost convinces me that virtue even here is its own reward, and vice—Pshaw! this will not do, once more, farewell! Donavan, I will bear up; what is the boasted

theory of man if it ever degenerates into the weakness of lamentation!

" Whilst I have power, I sign myself

" Your wretched friend,

" W. COVENTRY."

At the instant of receiving the above letter, Donavan was just preparing to walk through his grounds to the church, in order to join the hands of a young couple, who had been long attached, and whose parents had at last come to some understanding about money matters: each party being rich, and the settlements having been apparently of more importance than the peace of mind of the youthful pair.

The parade and bustle of a grand wedding in a quiet rural village, is generally the subject of much curiosity; and Donavan, wishing to be punctual, consigned Willoughby's letter to his pocket, till he could give it due attention, not imagining of course the tenour of its desperate contents. The young lady was a friend and neighbour of Elizabeth's, whose situation precluded her attendance at the ceremony; but Mr. Vincent gave the bride away; and after all the usual forms and ceremonies were over, and the parties severally dispersed, Do-

navan requested Mr. Vincent to accompany him to the parsonage, that he might send some tidings of Willoughby to Mrs. Coventry and Elizabeth, the former being at Beech Park, on account of the interesting and expected event. The bells were ringing merrily—the radiant beams of a meridian sun cheered the face of nature, whilst the yet busy hum of village curiosity gave peculiar animation to the scene; and till Donavan and Vincent reached the study door, conversation and remarks on the bridal party prevented the perusal of Willoughby's letter.

"And now," said Vincent, "let us hear, Donavan, what Willoughby can tell us: I am particularly anxious to take some tidings of him and Ellinor to Elizabeth, as she has of late often observed, that their very long silence was no proof of their improvement in happiness. But whilst you look through the letter yourself, I will take up this newspaper." And sitting down with his back towards Donavan, he did not mark the agitation with which the letter was perused.

Imagining he heard the paper fall from the hands of Donavan, he turned hastily round, and saw him leaning on the table, pressing his

forehead, and with so alarmed and altered a countenance, that in a hurried accent he could only call on his name.

Donavan started, and pointing to the letter said:

"Be prepared for a dreadful communication. You must read the contents of that paper, and then aid me with your counsel to pursue some active measures to recover our misguided friend. Alas, how unavailing the thought! Poor Willoughby! I fear he has been too guarded in all his proceedings."

When Vincent had perused the letter, some mournful conversation necessarily ensued, nor could he and Donavan readily determine in what manner to break the sad intelligence to Mrs. Coventry and Elizabeth; they thought that Elizabeth's critical situation rendered it advisable to conceal the distressing news for the present, particularly as a few hours might make a great alteration in Elizabeth's strength of mind and body, consequently she was little capable at that moment to bear with fortitude so unlooked-for a trial.

After various hurried observations, distressing regrets, charitable comments, and heart-rending fears for Willoughby, it was agreed,

that Donavan should go immediately to town, as if on his own intended business, in order, if possible, to trace the fugitive, and to learn by some necessary enquiries more of this unhappy affair.

"If you and I are thus shaken to read in these incoherent lines the fate of poor Willoughby," Donavan said, "how hard will be the trial to his afflicted mother, for, whatever be the result of my journey to town, she must on my return know the whole truth, and to your discretion be it left, to acquaint Mrs. Vincent with poor Willoughby's departure."

After some necessary arrangements, Donavan was on the road to London, and Vincent returned to his own habitation, endeavouring to meet Mrs. Coventry and Elizabeth with an unembarrassed countenance and speech. Elizabeth's feelings of indisposition had abated, and engrossed with the subject of the nuptials of her young friend, the traits of seriousness on the brow of her husband, and the occasional abstraction of his manner were fortunately unobserved both by her and Mrs. Coventry.

CHAPTER IV.

Mr. Harcourt, before he left town, had vainly endeavoured to gain an interview with Willoughby. He succeeded in meeting with Mr. Sedley; but from him he received no satisfactory replies to his anxious inquiries; and Ellinor was too impatient to acquaint her father with every existing circumstance, and to prepare for her own removal, to allow with patience that Mr. Harcourt should defer his journey another day.

As soon as possible after his arrival in Somersetshire, he disclosed Ellinor's situation to Mr. Onslow; and facts spoke too plainly to admit of any successful palliation of Willoughby's conduct. Mr. Onslow reflected very severely on Ellinor's romantic pertinacity in marrying Willoughby, and avowed that he had always augured that no good could ensue from her union with a beggar. "Fool that I was," he continued, "to be foiled in my resolutions by an obstinate girl. But I knew the honourable character of Willoughby's father, or I never

should have consented to the union. Where is the wretched fellow? This question is irrelevant and useless; for woe be to our meeting; and not a shilling of mine shall ever save him from the walls of a prison." Mr. Onslow was working himself up to the height of passion, again execrating Willoughby, and, from condemning Ellinor, abused the whole sex with more than usual acrimony; when Mr. Harcourt, patiently waiting till the storm had in some measure subsided, spoke thus:

"My good friend, I will not now plead for Willoughby—I only request you to bind yourself by no rash resolves—he will doubtless sufficiently suffer from his own conduct without our widening the source of his misery: conscience, at one season or other, is a faithful monitor; and may Heaven grant him the power, as well as the opportunity, of timely repentance."

"I do not think Heaven will be either interested in the fate, or interest the mind, of so dastardly a being. Heaven should, ere this, have granted him the power of withstanding such disgraceful temptations: and where is the justice of Infinite Wisdom, if——"

"Forbear, Onslow, to touch upon a subject

so trying to my feelings. I glory to think our opinions are totally dissimilar; nor for the wealth of both the Indies would I yield my stedfast faith in an all-wise, all-just, and merciful God; but this is not the moment for useless comment or controversial opinions. Of your daughter I would speak—and when you have considered her earnest wishes to be received and protected by you in this hour of trial, I trust you will accede to her petition, and immediately relieve the anxiety she must necessarily endure."

"It is a very hard case to be compelled, as it were, to accede to what is repugnant to one's feelings."

"She is your only child," said Harcourt. "What would the world say, were you to refuse her a safe and honourable asylum under such distressing circumstances? Nor could you be insensible to the reproaches of your own conscience, were she at any time to swerve from that strict rule of propriety so necessary to be observed by a woman separated from her husband."

Mr. Harcourt had touched the right chord which best vibrated on the distracting feelings of his friend. The opinions of the world ever

held him in despotic sway: and when Mr. Harcourt received a doubtful reply in regard to the child accompanying her mother, he again talked of the world's condemnation of the cruelty of his conduct to object to so reasonable and proper a request. And more than once lamenting that the child was not a boy, Mr. Onslow gave his unwilling consent to receive both the mother and child. He would vainly have stipulated that Ellinor should never again see her unworthy husband; but this point, from Mr. Harcourt's well-timed influence, remained without any positive decision.

When they met on the following morning, Mr. Onslow seemed far more averse to receive his daughter and child than Mr. Harcourt hoped or expected: he was severe and petulant on the subject; but his word was passed, and Mr. Harcourt would not allow of any repeal.

The fact was, a favourite housekeeper had, in no very gentle terms, expressed her dislike of Ellinor's return, and threatened Mr. Onslow to leave him, rather than have her again for a mistress. This person had of late gained great ascendancy over Mr. Onslow, and ruled with unlimited authority the domestics of his household.

Mr. Harcourt returned to town, and finding that Willoughby had never been at home, and Ellinor most impatient to begin her journey, all was arranged as soon as possible; and in due time she reached the paternal dwelling.

The first interview with her father was productive of loud and violent grief: she seemed more to be playing the part of a suffering heroine, than agitated by those feelings which a wife and a daughter so situated might be expected to endure.

She met Edward Onslow in silence and apparent apathy; but gaining courage from his friendly and brotherly demeanour, she soon claimed his attention to her catalogue of woes, repeating the wrongs she had sustained; and, in all the romantic ardour of her nature, solicited his commiseration and his everlasting friendship. "How happy I might have been!" was bursting from her lips, when her companion changed the current of her ideas by speaking of the probable repentance and future good conduct of her husband, delicately hinting, that in such a case the path of duty for a wife to pursue was plain and obvious.

"I will never again live with a man from whom I have received such unprincipled treat-

ment. My dear cousin, when you return to love and happiness, think now and then of a wretched being whose existence must wear out in endless sorrow—think of her unavailing repentance and——"

Edward interrupted her, and entreated that no vain retrospect might increase the weight of affliction she complained of; and after endeavouring to soothe and counsel her, he escaped from the endless repetition of her woes, contrasting the character of the woman to whom he was united, and shuddering at the probable fate his former fascination might have awarded him.

A very short time convinced Ellinor that her father's house was not the resting-place she had anticipated. No tender regret for the follies of a once almost idolized husband reached her heart: the minor vexations of a day, the ill-suppressed remark, or astonishment of former acquaintances at her enlarged form and changed appearance; the inattention and discontent of Mr. Onslow's favoured housekeeper; and even the infantine humours of a spoiled and petted child, harassed poor Ellinor's ill-regulated mind, and rendered her the slave of irritation and caprice. The last-mentioned evil, indeed,

extended to all around: the whole house frequently appeared in dread commotion, when the child's ungovernable passions could not be indulged or subdued; and if Mr. Harcourt remonstrated, or Mr. Onslow impatiently complained, the one was accused of undue severity, and the other of want of affection for an innocent grandchild—always more than hinting, that had her poor little Ellinor been a boy, the humours of childhood would have been better tolerated. Days of ennuï were yet more unbearable than the variety of such altercations. Books were Ellinor's aversion, her music and drawing had been long neglected, to every species of useful occupation she had ever been a stranger, and hours of solitude were now indeed hours of misery. She ever thought of her husband with resentment, and only selfishly lamented that his folly had deprived her of all the luxuries of a dissipated life. Mr. Onslow had permitted Ellinor to send an invitation to Miss Harrington; and whilst pleasing herself that on the bosom of friendship she could pour forth all her sorrows, she received a very laconic answer to her romantic complaints, with the observation, "that it was a pity she had parted from her husband, bad as he was, because it deprived her of the

power of enjoying the pleasures of a London life; that it must be dreadful to return to the monotony of her father's house; that Sedley had in every point deceived her; and that she was on the eve of marriage with a gentleman, who, if he looked rather old, was a real baronet, and would make her a lady for life:" concluding with the warmest assurance of friendly notice, should fate have in store for them a future meeting; and begging Ellinor to believe, that however exalted her own rank, she should ever be her tenderly attached friend.

CHAPTER V.

Mr. Donavan's journey to London had proved an unsuccessful one; no traces of the fugitive could be discovered; and Donavan, in hopeless anxiety, still lingered in town, catching at every shadow of information whereby he might seek his unfortunate friend. He knew Sedley had been Willoughby's constant companion, and naturally had sought an interview with him; but Sedley had been long in "durance vile," and really knew not of Willoughby's recent miseries. Disgusted with the libertine sentiments of a man encircled with ruin, and shuddering to think a once esteemed friend had in a great measure owed his downfall to the pernicious example and persuasions of such an infidel and gambler, he left him with the determination to return home, and consult with Vincent what next step should be taken in this mournful affair.

Harassed in mind, and worn out with fatigue, the close of the following day brought him to Mr. Vincent's door: he fancied a sort of con-

fusion in the house from the variation of lights at the windows, and really felt alarmed at the incoherence of the answers of the servants. He passed into the house—all looked desolate and forlorn. In a few moments Vincent rushed in, with a countenance of such despair, that the vehemence of Donavan's inquiries were almost unheeded. At length Vincent said, "Ten thousand welcomes, my anxiously expected friend;—my adored Elizabeth! a few hours must determine her life or death!" Donavan endeavoured to say something consolatory to Mr. Vincent, who could only answer for some time, "What a trial is this! My poor mother, dear Elizabeth's mother, can never survive it. Prepare to hear a sad account of the wanderer you have been seeking." Donavan, in serious alarm, conjured Vincent to tell him the worst; and after inquiring if all remained as it did in the apartment of the invalid, he gave the following account to his anxious companion.

"You will recollect how very poorly you left Elizabeth: her fluctuating state engrossed Mrs. Coventry's whole care and attention, and indeed almost confined them to their own apartment. But my dearest Elizabeth rallied again. I concealed my own anxious feelings on her brother's

account, and all appeared as usual. Yesterday morning, the dear creature so earnestly entreated me to take a little exercise, that I mounted my horse, determining to confine my ride to the vicinity of the park. During my absence, a letter came by the post, evidently, from the direction, written by an illiterate hand. Here, you may see, though intended for me, *Mrs.* might easily be mistaken for *Mr.* Elizabeth said to Mrs. Coventry, by whom she was sitting, 'Here is some curious petition; but whether to me or my husband, the contents must determine. Oh, it is meant for me; I will open it.' She did so, and fell senseless to the ground."

Donavan read as follows:—

"Sur

"I have by gude luck found out where the poor dying cretur belongs—if you be his lation pray com to my cottag for he his dredful hurt by falling from a cotch. Our Doctur say he cant live—his hed his broke and his leg, and he his bruised all over, he his not in his rite mind, and his calling out for Don something all nite and day—I found the kiver of a letter in his pockat, with yure name and name of yure ouse, so the Lord put it to my mind, to rite these, to

you—hopping you will not be fended, but come to see a pur suffren fellor creatur so no mor at precent, from

" Yur umble sarvant

" JANE AUBREY."

" We have had many proofs, Donavan, of the peculiar strength of Mrs. Coventry's mind; but, alas! this stroke will, I greatly fear, prove a fatal one. Distracted between anxiety for Elizabeth, and afflicted beyond even what we can imagine for the danger and sufferings of Willoughby, she remained for some hours in an insensible state; and when aroused to reflection, was only restrained from going immediately to him by the situation of Elizabeth. It was not in nature for me to leave her; and I could only despatch an express to you, with a brief account of our distress. The messenger must have passed you on the road. A few hours fatally convinced us of Elizabeth's danger: dear creature! weakened as she was by the extremity of suffering, her naturally strong mind sunk under every dreaded apprehension for Willoughby."

Vincent, overcome by the agitation of his feelings, entreated Mr. Donavan to act as his

better judgment should direct; and added, "hours may yet elapse before—— I cannot finish the sentence; but you will doubtless, as soon as possible, seek the wretched wanderer; and to the great Disposer of all events be our sorrows trusted."

"That I must leave you under such distressing circumstances," Donavan replied, "is an inevitable trial; nor indeed have I an hour to lose." A servant entered, to request Mr. Donavan would meet Mrs. Coventry in her dressing-room; and after the painful interview, every thing was promptly arranged for his departure. On looking again at Jane Aubrey's note, she had omitted any date or address; and the post-mark was the only clue which could possibly guide Donavan in his researches.

It may well be imagined with what a heavy heart Donavan took leave of his suffering friends, and how various were the difficulties after his arrival in London, before he could trace out the unfortunate Willoughby. Accompanied by a gentleman of the first skill and respectability, he at length, after many disappointments, entered the cottage which contained the once gay and unthinking Willoughby Coventry. Stretched on a clean but homely bed, more

changed than even Donavan's imagination had anticipated, he beheld the object of his painful search. An old woman was kneeling by the bed—" The Lord's will be done"—" Blessed are they that die in the Lord"—and, " Mercy on his soul"—were the words that struck upon Donavan's ear as he entered the house.

Evident that Jane Aubrey, the writer of the note, was Willoughby's despairing but well-intentioned hostess, no time was lost in endeavouring to ascertain the real state of the sufferer, to soothe the good woman into something like composure, and to inquire by what means Willoughby was reduced to his present state, and why he was the inhabitant of her cottage.

Donavan's medical companion gave it as his decided opinion, that Willoughby could not be removed from his present humble abode; that the contusion on his head, and the alarming appearance of the fractured limb, evinced the most dangerous symptoms: and having sent for the surgeon of the village, (who had in the morning pronounced that amputation alone could save the patient's life,) some operative plans were commenced, whilst a death-like stillness yet pervaded the features of the apparently dying man.

The surgeon said, he would risk a few hours longer, in order to save, if possible, the last dreaded operation. Donavan, stationed by the bed-side, could only await in silence the awful fate of Willoughby; and after he had written to Mr. Vincent, he heard from Jane Aubrey the account of Willoughby's accident.

She was first beginning a prolix recital of her own affairs; but Donavan, in the kindest manner, requested she would confine herself to the account of her meeting with his friend.

"Very true, Sir; how often we selfish mortals do forget what is right! Well, Sir, I went to town, God help me, to fetch a grandchild home; and the first time I seed this poor gentleman was at the top of the coach whereby I was travelling the road to Harwich; my cottage, you see, Sir, being in the way to that place. As luck would have it, or rather as it pleased the blessed Lord, he sat down next to me and my poor child. Mercy on me, how he did look! I was affeard to say much to him; but once he took notice of my grandchild so strangely—it came into my head, that, though looking so young, he was married, and had lost a little child. Well, Sir, we travelled on, and he encouraged me to tell him all my troubles, and

what the Lord had done for me, and how often I had received comfort from reading the blessed Gospel. He sometimes groaned, and said, 'Go on;' and once, when I told him as how the father of the pretty babe in my lap took to drinking, got in debt, and left my poor darter for foreign parts, without iver saying good bye; that she had been a gude wife to him, and being almost starved, soon died of a broken heart; that I myself, though not very well to do in the world, was just coming from town to save from the parish my own child's blessed infant; and that I trusted to the Lord above that his mercies would not be taken away; I verily thought, Sir, the poor gentleman would have run out of his sense. I tried to console him by talking of what our holy Saviour had done for us; but it would not do—he turned quite sullen-like, pulled his hat over his eyes, but still kept staring at me and my poor babe. Well, Sir, we went on a few miles; and I not being very strong in the arms, a sudden jolt of the cotch made this dear little creature give such a spring, that she must have been under the wheels, if the dear kind gentleman had not seized her by the clothes and hindered her fall. Oh! I shook like any thing. I could not for a few minutes do any thing or say

any thing; and if this dear kind gentleman did not hold the baby for me till I recovered, just for all the world as if he had been used to nurse his own—worse luck to me, there was no other woman on the top of the cotch. To make short of my story; we got composed, and jogged on, till very near my poor cottage. My good friend had seemed to sleep, when, oh! I shall never forget the time, just as we were driving like mad, and turning that there corner you may see from the winder, the hind wheel they say caught hold of somewhat, and the cotch was upset. Blessed be the Lord, I and the babe was not hurt; but some men were hurt at the top; and this poor creature felled upon such a heap of stones, that every body said he was quite dead. Lord help me, no house near but this poor one; and the Lord put it into my mind to take the pur cretur in. He had saved the life of my darter's child; and I thought of the blessed Gospel. I sent for my nearest neighbour and the doctor; we got him to bed; and oh how he did rave about every thing! The doctor could not set his poor leg; and after the pur cretur had talked quite violent like, he turned as still as you now see him. The doctor said he would avertise; when, as gude luck would

have it, I found in his coat pocket the kiver of a letter, all along with the pocket book I just give to you. The blessing of a little larning made me think of writing where the kiver said. Oh how I watched and prayed, that the letter might reach some one, and that the Lord would look down upon us miserable sinners, for the pur gentleman did so rave about being undone and ruinated,—but what does this signify?—for you know, sir, if we do but believe and repent, the greatest sinner shall be saved thro mercy."

As Donavan found it vain to stem the loquacity of his companion, he sat in deep contemplation of the scene before him, assisting at intervals with the tenderest care to arouse, or to soothe the wretched sufferer. A short time compelled the more experienced practitioner to pronounce, symptoms were of so unfavourable a nature, that little hope could be encouraged of Willoughby's recovery. Insensibility had yielded to delirium. More assistance was written for from London, and the last dreaded operations determined upon, as the only means of prolonging the time to combat the effects of the contusion. The painful task of writing a true and full account of Willoughby

could not be deferred,—a mother had wrested from him the sacred promise; Vincent was to prepare her for his communications;—and Donavan, after having narrated every particular, and the heads of Jane Aubrey's prolix recital, thus proceeds:

"What can I say to my anxious and inestimable friends, to support them under the various trials they are now called upon to endure! Fain would I anticipate, Vincent, that the dear object of your peculiar solicitude is restored in safety to your prayers! and that my more than mother is supported at this dreadful hour, by the fortitude of a Christian. Never were the ties of maternal affection more strongly drawn, than in Mrs. Coventry's anxious bosom: from my boyish days, how have I witnessed her agitating hopes and fears for the welfare of this almost idolized son. Poor Willoughby! what resolves has he not formed! what renunciation of vice has he not meditated! But, trusting to his own strength, he has fallen in the hour of temptation. He has not denied a God, but the evidences of his power, and the truths of his Gospel. An unfortunate marriage contributed to his downfall, and the world and

its allurements again held their despotic sway over an unstable and disappointed mind. This is to me a bitter stroke, for I have loved him as a brother; and amidst all his vices and his follies, could never relinquish the hope, that eventual reformation would restore him to himself, to his family, to peace, and to his God!

"I write by this post to Mr. Onslow: it is right he should know that the husband of his daughter is probably on the bed of death; it is right she should be apprized of his awful situation. I am sorry I could not meet with her after my first journey to town; she had then left London for her father's house. You shall hear again from me as soon as possible. I am most anxious and impatient for favourable tidings of your dear Elizabeth: I can scarcely brave a contrary supposition. I am weary with watching, yet I cannot sleep, and my pen is some slight relief to the weight that oppresses me. You shall hear every post.

"I am your's faithfully,

"A. Donavan."

The next day, and the following, but confirmed the medical attendants of the extreme danger of the patient. From some slight dif-

ference in their opinion, the amputation was for a time deferred, after Donavan had written to Mr. Onslow and Mr. Vincent, that it was inevitable. Willoughby's delirium subsided, and by the tenderest caution, Donavan had ventured to speak to him. And now, often exhausted by bodily pain and mental anguish, despair, more than repentance, was generally the consequence of Donavan's prayers or serious exhortations. He sometimes shrunk even from Donavan's presence, entreating to be left to his wretched fate; then calling on his beloved mother and sister, not to execrate his memory; and sometimes terming his wife a mistaken and deluded woman, he would relapse into death-like insensibility, and be alike regardless of Donavan's presence or attentions.

Donavan was in some degree relieved by the following letter from Vincent.

"Elizabeth lives! her precious life is spared! My full heart can scarcely breathe as it ought to do, the fervent aspirations of gratitude towards our great and merciful God. To dwell on what the dear creature has suffered, or on the feelings of a husband and a mother, during the awful and expected crisis, would be neither

a salutary nor a practicable task. The babe was born alive. Elizabeth was for some hours insensible to all around;—at length, she asked for her child! Why, why am I weekly dwelling on irremediable disappointment? She felt as a mother, but she bore the stroke as a Christian, and soon endeavoured to console me for the failure of my cherished hopes, for a more lovely boy never blessed a parent's eye. But Elizabeth is spared! or you would too well know what misery had awaited me. Mrs. Coventry can hardly be persuaded sometimes not to set off immediately to you and Willoughby —then the peculiar care which my beloved wife requires, and which such a mother only can persevere in, compels her to give up the intention; and the divided interest of her affectionate heart, is too plainly visible in her varying countenance.

"Poor Willoughby, it is evident that he was desperately flying from his country and his friends! I hope Mrs. Coventry derives some comfort in the thought, that he is not suffering from sickness or accident in a foreign land, without the aid of skilful attendants, without a consolatory and judicious friend like yourself; either to endeavour to stem the progress of

his suffering, or to receive his parting breath. From the tenor of your letter, I cannot entertain much hope of his recovery. I have been obliged to acquaint Mrs. Coventry with every particular previous to Willoughby's accident: we know the strength of her mind, and there are few cases where concealment does not render any expected stroke doubly heavy.—— Donavan, I can scarcely ask myself, how I should have borne the loss of my inestimable wife; the threatened evil has indeed made me reflect on the uncertainty of sublunary happiness. In theory, how often has the subject engaged my serious attention, and I have presumptuously thought, that the words, 'God's will be done,' would, in the hour of trial, be the language of my heart: instead of which, 'all other ills I could have borne but this,' was the spontaneous repetition of my anguished mind. May a merciful God pardon the impatience of a wounded spirit, and sanctify the hours of temporal suffering to our eternal welfare!——My Elizabeth knows of the danger her brother is in, and that you are with him; but she is in too weak a state herself to make very minute enquiries: yet I can see how distressed she is for the inquietude Mrs. Coventry

must suffer, and how anxious to hear better tidings of Willoughby.

"I need not say how impatiently we are expecting your next letter. The children are quite well: Charles is scarcely reconciled to your absence, but my little Elizabeth seems to interest him more than ever; they are the best friends imaginable. With a variety of messages from both, I can only add, how truly I am

"Your friend,

"Frederick Vincent."

When the distressing account of Willoughby's accident reached Mr. Onslow, Ellinor was reclining in all the languor of ennuï on a sofa; Mr. Harcourt and Mr. Onslow engaged at chess; and Edward finishing the perusal of an interesting publication. The servant gave Mr. Donavan's letter to his master. "Come, Harcourt," he said, "we will finish the game before I open the letter. It is Mr. Donavan's handwriting: what can he have to say to me? I do think the task of answering mere matter-of-fact letters is intolerable." He finished and won the game; and in great exultation broke the seal, though still wondering what Donavan could have to say to him. He read in silence,

and with a slight change in his countenance, gave the letter to Mr. Harcourt.

" Dear me," Ellinor aroused to say, " perhaps Mrs. Vincent is confined; I am sure I wish her well; how odd her husband should not write."

Mr. Onslow, unmindful of her remark, more than once repeated, " A very pretty business."

" Well, gentlemen," cried Ellinor, seeing Edward Onslow now reading the letter, " Is the secret worth knowing? You really all look very full of intelligence."

Mr. Harcourt sat down by her and said: " We are shocked, Ellinor, at the contents of this letter; and although circumstances have combined to estrange both your affection and society from your husband, you will also doubtless be shocked to hear he is suffering on the bed of sickness." He then, in the kindest manner, acquainted her of the accident Willoughby had met with. A slight hysteric fit was followed by some oblique reproaches, " that he could think of leaving the country without taking leave of her :" for an instant she called to mind the Willoughby Coventry, that had captivated her variable heart, and the day-dream of happiness she had experienced at the first

period of their marriage. Then rose to view the unmerited sufferings she had endured; Willoughby's neglect, for the sake of an unprincipled woman, every impulse of tenderness was checked, and Willoughby dreadfully disfigured by wounds, and the loss of a leg, made her dread the anticipation of Mr. Harcourt's advice, to fly to the scene of woe, and receive the parting breath of her husband: but Mr. Harcourt knew her mind too well either to fear that the afflicting news would overwhelm it with despair, or induce one effort of exertion in the chamber of suffering: he therefore entreated her to be composed, for, that unfortunate circumstances would have probably parted her from Willoughby, and urged, that it must be a great source of consolation to know, that no human means were left untried to restore him to ease and comfort, and that the issue of life or death rested alone on God.

Mr. Onslow could scarcely restrain from severely commenting on Willoughby's former evil habits, and recent conduct; and added, "When men will run into certain ruin, and bring on themselves the inflicted misery, who can pity them! wretched, inauspicious indeed was the hour, when that poor girl wrung from me my

unwilling consent to marry Willoughby Coventry!"

"My dear uncle," Edward interrupted, "let us not look back, I fear there is little hope of Mr. Coventry's recovery, and surely in the grave all things should be forgotten. Allow me also to say, that self-inflicted miseries are ever the hardest to be borne: a wounded conscience is an evil, which often baffles all human commiseration; but there have been instances when heaven has awakened the mind to repentance, by means most apparently severe to us, erring and short-sighted mortals."

Ellinor expected Mr. Harcourt to take up the argument against her father, and to talk a great deal about religion; but that Edward should broach such methodistical opinions, excited her unfeigned astonishment. She continued to observe her cousin with the deepest attention, and wondered how she could ever have preferred Willoughby to him, yet, as she termed every one methodistical that quoted Scripture, whilst she pitied the delusion, she instantly attributed his conversion to the new ties he had formed in America, and imagined his wife to be more precise and strict, than even Willoughby's mother and sister. Mr.

Harcourt took up the subject, and said, " I perfectly agree in all my young friend has advanced. The evils we bring on ourselves by misconduct, are the bitterest evils to which this life is subject; and that it often leads to a fatal misapprehension of the ways of Providence, and sometimes to a criminal opinion of the justice of heaven, every ancient record, and every familiar example plainly corroborate."

Mr. Onslow, in a peculiar tone, repeated " Providence !"

" Yes, Onslow," Mr. Harcourt continued, " I scruple not to affirm my unshaken belief in a superintending Providence; but it is not our present purpose to argue, but to act. If your heart and purse are not open to the claims of misery, should this suffering fellow creature survive, if you can thank God you are not as other men are; or that you have never disgraced your nature by yielding to worldly temptations, as the husband of your only child has done; I confess your resolution is every thing but praise-worthy, and your self-righteousness far exceeding mine.

" The culprit in question, I fear, ere this, has set at nought all human aid, and at a higher tribunal than ours, must await his trial."

Mr. Onslow interrupted, " To be relieved from the burden of life—to die and be no more, must prove to him a desirable change: and, as to a heavenly tribunal, Harcourt, you well know my sentiments on the subject, and that all your endless repetitions can little avail."

Edward aroused his cousin from an apparently unprofitable reverie, and putting her arm within his own, he led her into the garden, and vainly endeavoured to counteract evil impressions, or to bend her mind to a proper sense of Willoughby's unfortunate situation.

Mr. Harcourt well knew, that " times and seasons" should be attended to, and after manfully maintaining his own opinions on the subjects in question, he politically asked Mr. Onslow what the world would say, if pecuniary assistance were by him withheld, and that strangers, or more distant connections, in the event of Willoughby's recovery, came forward to relieve his embarrassments. The opinion of the world, as has been before observed, had always due effect on Mr. Onslow's actions, and he answered, " It were wise to wait for the next accounts from the pen of the good Samaritan."

CHAPTER VI.

Every expected intelligence was punctually transmitted by Donavan to Willoughby's anxious relatives and friends at Beech Park: and as Mrs. Vincent was in a fair way to become convalescent, nothing could persuade Mrs. Coventry to give up her determination of going to her son; her journey was nearly arranged, but a fresh account from Mr. Donavan induced her for the present to postpone leaving Beech Park. Another consultation had pronounced the possibility of saving Willoughby's leg, and hopes were entertained, if some days of perfect quiet could be gained, of removing the suffering invalid to town, where, in case of any unexpected relapse the first medical assistance would be at hand, and all the alleviating comforts of illness procured. The contusion on the head wore a more favourable appearance, but Donavan added, the physicians had pronounced, that the agitation which would naturally occur to both parties, were Mrs. Coventry to see Willoughby at present, would, in all

human probability, prove fatal to their patient, nor could they answer for the consequences, if every direction in the sick chamber were not strictly adhered to. Mrs. Coventry submitted to the decree, and was cheered with the hope of either soon meeting Willoughby in London, or having him removed by gentle stages to Beech Park, or to her own cottage.

Faithful accounts had likewise been forwarded to Onslow Hall, of the abatement of Willoughby's dangerous symptoms; and as any change was preferable to a monotonous life in Ellinor's estimation, and losing the horror of expecting to see Willoughby with the loss of a leg, she might probably have been prevailed on to make some efforts towards a reconciliation, if indisposition had not confined her to bed, for a neglected cold had brought on serious complaints. Mrs. Randall, who was now at the hall, was compelled to bear with patience the querulous complaints of illness, and the vacuum of an ill-directed mind.

Ellinor continually dwelt on the wrongs she had sustained from her husband; on the instability of the ungrateful Louisa's friendship, and on the discomforts she then endured from domestic grievances under her father's roof, not

forgetting even to lament to her patient hearer, her feelings of repentance that she had given up such a man, as Edward Onslow for Willoughby Coventry. Mrs. Randall agreed in the justice of her statement, and finally settled, that Ellinor was the most ill used of women, that it would argue great weakness of character if she ever consented to live again with such a faithless husband; she, who had nothing to reproach herself with, and who might ever be liable to the insults of having other Julias preferred to her: "Besides, my dear," Mrs. Randall continued, "It is against your interest to think of leaving your good father's house. He would certainly try to make your cousin the undisputed heir of all his fortune, and then what would become of this beautiful little angel."

Ellinor did not so rapidly recover as her impatience had anticipated. Her cough and hectic fever did not yield to remedies, and her medical attendant declared, if she were not more tractable, her complaints might become of a very serious nature. Mrs. Randall affected to treat this opinion very lightly, and affirmed that medical men were sometimes mistaken; such caution might apply to age and infirmity, but that her dear Mrs. Coventry had still youth and

a good constitution in her favour. In a word, these two associates were admirably suited to talk, not to converse; flattery was Mrs. Randall's motto, and Mr. Harcourt and Edward saw with regret the influence she still retained over the mind of Ellinor.

Donavan's unremitted attention to his friend; excellent nursing from their kind hearted hostess, and the best medical advice, contributed to assuage Willoughby's sufferings, but still the limb which had been saved from amputation, wore a doubtful appearance, and, as if the extremity of weakness would for a length of time, if ever, prevent its bearing its own weight; his forehead was dreadfully disfigured, and the contusion and bruises mended slowly; nor till the fever abated could a removal be ventured on.

Willoughby spoke but little; alas! it is not on the bed of pain and sickness, that the tongue can be eloquent.

My mother! my sister! he sometimes faintly repeated, but judicious as was Donavan's care and attention both to his spiritual and bodily sufferings, Willoughby seemed to turn away in despair and weakness, from joining in the supplication of prayer.

This want of a call from heaven, was a great

affliction to Mrs. Aubrey, whose audible prayers that Willoughby might become one of the elect, and never again fall from grace, would probably sometimes have disturbed her charge, had he not often remained in an insensible state. Donavan had found it vain to convince her of some errors she had imbibed on the subject of religion, but he saw her heart was guileless, and as far as she was able, performed her duty in the state of life which heaven had allotted her; and he therefore deemed it wiser to confirm her faith in essential doctrines, and to wave abstruser subjects, which had, he well knew, often disturbed stronger minds than this poor woman's. "Lord help us," she one day said, "sinners that we are, if it is the blessed Lord's will to call us from a state of perdition, nothing can prevent our being saved! Oh that I may one day hear that this dear gentleman has received the grace of God; the greater our sin, the greater objects we are like to be looked on by our Saviour. Good works to be sure are nothing, but never shall I forget when that dear creature saved the life of my baby."

"I am sure, my good woman, you have shewn every grateful sense of my friend's presence of mind—you received him into your

house when you thought him friendless, and have proved an excellent and attentive nurse. Depend upon it, when he is better, the welfare of his soul shall be the first consideration."

" A thousand thanks," she returned, " for telling me so. Alas, Sir, we only try to do our duty when we are kind to our neighbour; we are all unprofitable servants, and faith is every thing. You ought to know better than such a sinful ignorant creature as I am. But I see the dear soul wants something," and she was instantly employed in the active duties of the kindest nurse, and soon told Donavan, with the greatest joy, that her patient had said, " God bless you!" and she thought he had looked up to heaven!

CHAPTER VII.

It was at length pronounced that Willoughby could be removed with safety to London, and every convenience was soon arranged to lessen the fatigue of travelling. Mr. Vincent had joined Willoughby and an experienced medical man in the arduous task. Willoughby bore the journey much better than was expected, but suffered an increase of fever and pain after the journey was accomplished; and for some days, the luxury of a convenient apartment, and all the alleviations which money could command, were lost and unobserved by poor Willoughby.

Elizabeth was daily recovering, and though some natural regrets would arise at the disappointment she had experienced, and which perhaps could only be truly estimated by a mother, she bent in acquiescence to the will of heaven, and clung with increasing affection to her remaining treasure. She urged her mother's departure for poor Willoughby's sake; and when Mrs. Coventry contemplated the de-

licacy of her appearance, and almost wavered in resolution to leave her, she encouraged the separation, by declaring " to feel less anxious about dear Willoughby, would alone expedite her own perfect recovery." An esteemed friend and neighbour, Miss Brudenel, sister to the young lady Mr. Donavan had lately married in his own village, was to be Elizabeth's nurse and companion during Mrs. Coventry's absence. The kind and experienced Mrs. Mansel had been sent to Willoughby's lodgings before his arrival, in order to arrange all things for his comfort and convenience, and very painful appeared to be his first interview with this old and faithful servant.

As Willoughby slowly recovered his perception of outward objects, his mind became visibly agitated and uneasy, and when Donavan hinted the probability of soon seeing Mrs. Coventry in town, he exclaimed, " The sight of my poor mother would give the finishing stroke to my sufferings; I could not look on her dear countenance, and retain the remnant of my senses; in mercy, Donavan, save us the trial of an interview. My sins have taken such hold upon me, I am not able to look up."

He spoke with difficulty, and Donavan feared

to urge a subject so distressing to his feelings; and having apprized Mrs. Coventry of the true state of his mental and bodily powers, left it to her to determine what line to pursue, and she instantly resolved to go to town. To be under the same roof with Willoughby, perhaps to watch him when asleep, and from the next apartment to hear him speak or breathe, would be such alleviations of inquietude, that no consideration could tempt her to defer her departure another day. For the first week after her arrival, the faint exclamation from Willoughby, "It would kill me to see my mother," caused her ever to retreat from the door of his apartment, only to contemplate his altered countenance when asleep, and to offer up her silent petitions to heaven for his recovery. As he increased in strength, Donavan prepared him for the information that Mrs. Coventry was in the house; and, as she heard the words "Can my mother ever forgive me?" nature conquered prudential resolves, and she advanced towards the couch, endeavouring to say, "Oh, let me see my son, so dear to my heart in the hour of suffering." Locked in each other's embrace, maternal and filial tenderness might have proved fatal in their effects, but for the care of their watchful at-

tendants; and from that hour, Mrs. Coventry shared with the trusty Mansel in all the kind offices of a long and fluctuating illness. She had parted with Willoughby high in health, in strength, and manly beauty—she met him weaker than an infant, his countenance disfigured, pale and emaciated, with a very distant prospect of being again restored to health and activity. She would have sunk under the contrariety of her feelings, but for the hope of contributing by ceaseless attention to his eventual recovery. At length his tedious amendment permitted his removal to Mrs. Coventry's cottage in the country, which being so contiguous to the parsonage, ensured him the society of Donavan without fatigue or inconvenience. Elizabeth was inexpressibly shocked when she first saw him, and soon marked with sad regret the dejected apathy of his whole manner and appearance; nor did time seem to overcome the feelings of despair, when the slightest recurrence to past events was the subject of conversation. Donavan also marked how he shunned serious subjects, and yet ever seemed lost in the painful reveries of a disturbed and agitated mind. He had sat one day in mournful silence, scarcely conscious of Donavan's pre-

sence, when he exclaimed, " Ruined, ruined, beyond redemption."

Donavan had wished for an opportunity of conversing more fully on temporal affairs, and assuring him, that owing to the exertions of friends, the wide extent of his debts was circumscribed, and that all things were arranging for his future convenience and comfort.

" And to whom do I owe these obligations?" he asked.

" The word obligation is not admissible, Willoughby. Be composed, and listen to what I wish to say."

Mr. Donavan then briefly narrated what had recently occurred in regard to pecuniary embarrassments; but it may not be interesting to enter into all the particulars of the ways and means, which through Mr. Vincent's exertions had been adopted: the arrangement was satisfactory to the principal creditors, and the more despotic and disgraceful debts were all in a train to be properly discharged. Mr. Vincent, whose liberal means were commensurate with his liberal mind, generously but delicately came forward in the business, and Mr. Donavan wrote a candid statement to Mr. Onslow of Willoughby's affairs. When he first received

the account, indignation at being applied to, dictated his answer. Mr. Harcourt reasoned on the forgiveness of injuries,—on the near affinity of the unfortunate man to his family, —that it was affording poor Willoughby the means of discharging pecuniary obligations,— in short, that the husband of his only daughter might languish out his life in a prison, without the seasonable interference of friends.

" Harcourt, I am resolved,—your importunities are useless; if this wretched fellow is again upheld in idleness and extravagance, the next, and the next application for relief, will still disgrace his character. He ought to suffer for his misdeeds; therefore, my good friend, let us dismiss the subject. Had he indeed behaved kindly to Ellinor, some youthful follies, some casual extravagance, might have been overlooked; as it is, I hope she will never put it in his power to deceive her again. When she seeks his protection, she loses mine."

" All this, Onslow, is just now irrelevant to the subject I have in view; yet I cannot proceed, without more than hinting, that the very precarious state of Ellinor's health, must confine her at present to your protection; should she recover, and should Willoughby meet any

terms of reconciliation, I leave it to your own conscience to determine if man should separate 'what God has joined together.'"

"I fear she continues to fret after the worthless fellow, but I do not think seriously of her complaints."

"Am I to understand that you positively refuse to join with others in the liberation of Willoughby from debt?"

"I cannot retract what I have said."

"Are you aware of what may be the world's opinion of your conduct? Either your ability will be questioned, or your boasted character for general philanthropy completely ridiculed."

This question seemed to have more weight with Mr. Onslow than argument or persuasion; and when Mr. Harcourt declared he himself would meet the parties, and come forward in any way which could essentially be of service to Willoughby, and affirmed that Mr. Vincent had proposed all that was liberal and just, Mr. Onslow began to waver in his ill-timed resolutions, and in a few hours he ungraciously consented to reasonable proposals, but neither founded on principle or feeling, but from the fear of the world's censure, and the comparison

that might be drawn betwixt Mr. Harcourt and himself. Mr. Harcourt had promptly taken a journey to London, and in some conferences with Mr. Vincent confided to him the nature of his credentials, and his own mind, together.

Willoughby did listen in silence to all Donavan's communications, and sat so long apparently absorbed in painful reflections, that after arousing him from his reverie, he with all the earnestness of friendship urged him to disclose those feelings which seemed so much to harass his weakened frame, adding, " I have avoided entering on those subjects, Willoughby, which I consider of the last importance to a being so mercifully preserved from destruction as you have been. I have avoided perplexing your mind by a prolix detail of the difficulties overcome in pecuniary affairs, because you were too weak to give a necessary or exclusive attention."

" Donavan, the hour of reckoning must indeed arrive; could you but know all that has passed in my wretched mind, since I lay in that awful and insensible state;—why should I not avow, since the hour I determined to leave my

native land,—since I wrote to you an incoherent and despairing transcript of my lacerated mind, —I might be humbled by your pity, but hardly dare to hope for any salutary commiseration. The pangs of an awakened conscience are unbearable. In this life my sun is for ever set; and beyond this state of existence, all is impenetrable darkness."

"Willoughby, I can only say,—and surely there is instant conviction in the thought,—that He, who counselled us to forgive an erring brother, not only seven times, but seventy times seven, will himself forgive through faith and repentance, all who are weary and heavy laden with the burden of their sins."

"Your argument is indisputable. Faith is the grand foundation of human acceptance. I am just now unequal to any argumentative conflict. My mother will soon return, and I would if possible, receive the Vincents with tolerable composure. Our conference must be long and undisturbed. One question before they arrive. —My once beloved, misguided Ellinor, when I was apparently on the bed of death, did she ever express one wish towards an exchange of forgiveness? —— But, alas! here conscience

breaks the sentence! and perhaps it is but just that she should remember me only as the disturber of her peace. She has not a strong mind, and is probably swayed by Mr. Onslow's more determined mandate. I have a child, Donavan, whose infantine caresses would sometimes have reached my heart—but the discomforts of home!—What would I say!—I will not think of poor Ellinor's comparatively lighter errors!"

"You must indeed forbear this retrospection," Donavan interrupted—"I mentioned to you Ellinor's indisposition; and most unfit in every point of view would she have been to have seen you in your late dangerous state. Take comfort that she is so respectably situated with her father, and leave to time the development of her sentiments. Your child is too young to have missed a father's fondness, and time may yet bless you with a father's feelings, and all a father's joy.—You are now exhausted and weary; try for half an hour's repose before the return of your anxious relatives and friends."

Willoughby was a little recruited by the time of their arrival; and the day passed more than

usually cheerful. The least appearance of amendment in Willoughby's debilitated frame, never failed to brighten the countenance of his mother, for she too often had anticipated, that the effects of so eventful an accident would in the end be most fatal to her beloved and suffering invalid. The children, Charles and Elizabeth, had been permitted to stay half an hour with Willoughby. Miss Brudenel had cheered the party by her innocent gaiety of spirits, and she had the happy art to discriminate, when to enliven and when to soothe the languor of indisposition. She had proved a very dear blessing to Elizabeth, during her husband's absence; nor was the brother of such a friend one instant neglected, when she could amuse him by conversation, or interest him by reading. She had been long engaged to an officer of fortune and great respectability, who, from the duties of his profession was obliged to join his regiment in the East Indies, and whose constant and affectionate correspondence, and the hope he held out of ere long gaining leave of absence, consoled and supported her mind to bear the trying separation. She could therefore feel for Willoughby all the solicitude of a sister,

and her frequent and mental reservation was, "Oh, if my William were thus situated, could I act as Mrs. Coventry does! Whatever had been my wrongs, the bed-side of my husband, in the hour of trial, could alone have mitigated the feelings of inquietude."

CHAPTER VIII.

Willoughby's strength, however, had not proved equal to his exertions. On the next day, symptoms of fever and increasing pain, forbade the promised conference with Donavan, and a darkened chamber and quiet nursing were unresistingly submitted to.

When restored to comparative convalescence, he himself led to many interesting subjects, and requested Donavan would patiently listen to what he had to say:—

"This last unexpected, though as it has proved, inconsequential attack of bodily suffering, would convince me, had I wanted a proof, of the uncertainty of my freedom from pain, and I may add, of the frail tenure of my mortal existence."

Willoughby paused, and Donavan endeavoured to soothe his agitated mind, but almost regardless of the attempt, he proceeded.—

"Donavan, I am not fit to die! it is this thought which has preyed on my mind, paralyzed my senses, and engendered either apathy

or despair; and I am warned, by this sinking frame, that my days are numbered."

"It were presumptuous, Willoughby, for mortal to pronounce the fiat of an eternal God; but according to the limited judgment of man, time and opportunity may yet be spared to make peace with your own conscience and with Heaven."

"Your patient forbearance, my kind friend, is not lost upon me, for how vehement have been my vows of reformation, my determined resolves to become a rational and useful member of society; and at this instant a pledged and broken vow on the cold remains of my estimable father, is no little source of unavailing regret."

"Look forward for the redemption of time, and to a higher source, than the stability of human strength to fulfil praiseworthy resolutions of amendment."

"I will do so, Donavan, but first you must listen to a brief retrospect of the past, and you will be better enabled to judge, if a radical cure can ever be effected in this wretched and repentant mind. Estranged from home by a variety of unfortunate circumstances, I rushed into every species of dissipation. Your cor-

rect principles and well-regulated mind can, perhaps, form no just idea of the progressive steps to ruin, when the cherished companion of good fellowship deliberately spreads the artful and contagious snare, combining the ridicule of infidelity with the bold example of sins most besetting to our nature, when inebriation throws a veil over reason and feeling, and sacrifices fortune, and fame, and conscience, to the disgraceful vice of gaming. When, I say, added to this, the wiles of an unprincipled woman placed home in a yet more disgusting point of view, and by every species of extravagance, hastened the ruin of her victim; you will not wonder at frenzied resolutions, leading to unjust and dishonourable demands."

Here Willoughby recapitulated the last scenes between Ellinor and himself;—his request, and her refusal of the jewels, and then proceeded :—

" I had been once saved, you may remember, Donavan, by a mother's prompt bestowal of her only worldly possessions; and I felt the more severely, that a wife should selfishly withhold such useless baubles to herself; for well I augured, that Mr. Onslow would receive his forsaken and wretched daughter. I forbear all

comment on poor Ellinor's reproaches and invectives ere we parted. Alas! I considered not my own faulty conduct, and I left her in such a state of mind, that nothing but the instant determination to leave the country could allay its ferment. Thank Heaven, I live to blush, when I avow, that I sold my father's watch and seals, to procure me the means of even my humble mode of travelling; his valued, and valuable watch, which I had yet resolutely saved from the destructive wreck around me, and which, ere he was laid in his coffin, I had solemnly vowed should ever be the companion of my person. It is needless to dwell on the hours of desperation and misery which elapsed before I found myself seated on the outside of the Harwich coach; or, to confess, that the aid of artificial spirits could alone have nerved my mind with strength, voluntarily to become a wretched alien to my country and my friends. The jargon of infidelity bewildered, without supporting me; one moment, I gloried in man's independence, and the next, would have changed existence with the meanest fellow creature. Sedley's arguments against revelation, had so shaken my faith and influenced my practice, that I once presumptuously

exclaimed, 'Now, for a miracle, to save me from destruction.' But where should I end, were I to give a just transcript of my sinful and impatient thoughts, even of the temerity of accusing Providence of permitting so much evil in the world, when, if his superintendance of human events could be undisputed, all evil might easily be averted, and man endued with strength to resist every species of temptation.

"Bear with me, Donavan, a few minutes longer, humbled as I now am in mind and body, I shall feel the severest reprobation of my conduct as an added proof of your inestimable friendship."

"Severity, Willoughby, to the truly penitent were presumptuously to arrogate what religion condemns; nor is it authorized even by the faultless example of our Saviour himself. With the riches of his love, he came to bind the broken heart, and to receive all that flee to him for succour."

"These are, indeed blessed sounds to the returning Prodigal, but let me proceed in my little eventful narrative:—For many miles, I sat in sullen silence, sometimes gazing on vacancy, or unconsciously fixing my eyes on the companions of my journey. You are already

acquainted with the conversation that commenced between Mrs. Aubrey and myself;—that emboldened by my apparent attention she, in all the garrulity of age, dwelt upon her past misfortunes, and her present prospects; that her simple dialect bespoke a mind, dependent as she termed it, on the blessed Lord; ever affirming, that when bowed down by affliction, some relief was always near, some friend raised up to soothe and to support her:—

"Donavan, when she said, 'Mayhap, Sir, you have lost a child,' I felt I was a father, and that I had indeed lost what might have proved my dearest blessing.

"The resignation she expressed under the accumulated evils of life, her faith in God, her untutored language, forced on my mind this conviction,—'That there must be a charm in that religion, which can cheer the dreary hours of poverty and affliction,—which can soothe the warfare of the passions, and bid the doubting mind be still.' Lost in rumination, I had almost forgotten self in the chaos of my thoughts; I was wretched, but not penitent; sophistical arguments crowded on my mind, but I endeavoured to mistake my own restlessness for the sagacity of a superior understanding,

and I then capriciously pitied the humble being before me, for her probably deceptive and enthusiastic feelings.

" She however continued her natural remarks and repetitions from Scripture. She was the only female in company. Our companions were engrossed with their own plans and conversation; and the poor woman seemed really to shrink from their boisterous habits. How long I should patiently have endured her garrulity I cannot tell; but the accident from which I rescued the child, forced me again to listen to her pious and grateful effusions.

" My self-hardiness was a little shaken; but the pathetic and grateful exclamations of my companion to Heaven and to me, were certainly not cordially received, nor joined in; though common humanity rejoiced that the infant was saved from destruction; and I gladly owned, how lucky was the chance that my arm had effected its escape. But I will not be too prolix nor minute, or I could dwell on my agonizing reflections as every mile-stone increased, as I then thought, an everlasting distance from my mother, my sister, and yourself. My resolution was nerved only by the certainty of a prison and disgrace. Do not interrupt me, Donavan;

I know you would say I should have tried the sincerity of my real friends; but you are happily ignorant of those attendant humiliating feelings which must accompany the petitions of a guilty conscience.

"I dare not now attribute to chance the nearly fatal accident which threatened my unworthy life. Before I became insensible, the bodily agony I suffered was almost past endurance. I thought I was dying; and the silent ejaculation of 'Mercy,' once, passed my lips. You are acquainted with all that followed. In some reasonable intervals, the incessant prayers and exhortations of my well-meaning hostess distressed my mind; and she often plainly told me, that without faith I could not be saved; and that until I was called from my state of darkness, I could not be one of the elect."

"Her's are errors of the mind, not of the heart, Willoughby; and at such a period, the very enthusiasm of her exhortations were perhaps calculated to awaken your dormant faculties—to induce you to think and to ponder on the escape from death you had experienced, and to search for truth through that Divine assistance which is ever prompt to direct and support the humble and the contrite spirit."

" Of this we will speak hereafter; for I have a long and arduous account to settle with God and my own conscience. It must occur to you, how much the faculties of my mind have been weakened, when the exhortations of my ignorant but well-meaning nurse, could alarm me with apprehensive doubts and unconquerable terrors of mind."

" This and other instances, Willoughby, ought to convince us how unstable are the boasts of the presumptuous in the hour of suffering, in the prospect of death and judgment. But you are fatigued; shall we defer conversation till your strength is a little recruited?"

" By no means; feeling, as I do, that I shall never recover, to procrastinate might be indeed a fatal error. I pass over the contrariety of my feelings when I first saw you at my bed-side, when you appeared to be the herald of mercy and consolation, when you combated the despair of guilt through the antidote of unfeigned repentance. Neither will I dwell on the eventful meeting with an adored mother and sister; nor of my heartfelt gratitude for all the exertions of my estimable friend Vincent, in regard to pecuniary subjects. To a dying man, Donavan, all these are secondary considerations. Oh,

why is it, that in the zenith of folly and dissipation I never feared death or judgment? And now, oh now, if such things are true, I am the veriest coward in existence."

"My dear friend, this may prove a blessed and salutary fear; and if it lead the repentant sinner to cast himself entirely upon the mercy of a Saviour, justification, through the free grace of God, may ultimately lead to that peace which 'fleeth not away.'"

"This would have sounded, some little time ago, like the cant of enthusiasm, or reason hoodwinked by the delusions of a weak imagination. It is true, I never dared to deny the existence of a God, or the probability of future rewards and punishments; but that unassisted human repentance was not a sufficient expiation of sin, never disturbed the convenient creed I had adopted. Hence, Donavan, those vain and useless resolves with which I have so often profaned the name of God; hence that dependence on my own strength, which lulled the tumult of an accusing conscience by the supposition of the unwarrantable free agency of man. Your admonitory letters touched the surface, but dwelt not in my mind; and when you urged the efficacy of Divine assistance co-operating with

man's endeavours to become a 'new creature' by the regenerating spirit of the Gospel, I determined to receive in silence such apparently incomprehensible truths, and to think, that when 'a convenient season' arrived, my moral character should be reformed; and ever felt assured, 'he can't be wrong, whose life is in the right.' Even at this period I was comparatively happy, when opposed to the time in which Sedley's precepts and Sedley's example held up in ridicule, not only the truths of revelation, but called in question, nay, absolutely denied, the expectation of a future state. Apostate as I was from all the social duties of life, Sedley's blasphemous but wary opinions at first startled and disgusted me. By degrees, they became familiar, and less revolting to my mind; and almost wishing to believe him right, I plunged deeper in the vortex of ruin, and by my conduct seemed to set reason and even common sense at defiance. Too well you know that ruin fatally approached; and could you but know what sad apprehensions I have recently suffered for having so offended my Maker and dishonoured my Redeemer; what horrors I have endured before I could look up to Heaven for mercy; you would indeed commiserate the wretchedness of

my state, and afford all the alleviations you dare to my broken heart. Believe, that I have a true and lively sense of every late mercy vouchsafed; for had I been permitted to reach a foreign land, without friends or fortune, burdened with an accusing conscience, what limits could have been put to the rashness of my despair! Surely what I should once have termed accident, was a blessing in disguise; and the poor woman's humble cottage, the haven of rest. And now, Donavan, I must not conceal from you the means of grace which have been vouchsafed me." Willoughby here took out a book from under the cushion of the sofa, and said, "One day my hostess, thinking me in an insensible state or asleep, had left the room; aroused by pain, I started up—and, gaining a little ease, I discovered her well-read Bible on the side of the bed. A partial light had been admitted into the room, not fearing to disturb me; the book was open, and the words, 'Come unto me, all ye that travel and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you'—caught my eye. To say how these words have dwelt upon my mind, is impossible: at first, in hours of sleep or hours of wakefulness, they seemed written on the very tablets of my heart; of late, they have been the

cause of that thoughtful reserve, on serious subjects, which you have at times vainly endeavoured to penetrate."

"They should have afforded you consolation, not perplexity, Willoughby."

"True, true, Donavan; but let me proceed. I felt, indeed I still feel, that I am not sufficiently humbled to flee to that sacred fount of mercy which the Gospel offers; but I should here mention, that after binding my nurse to secresy, I requested her to purchase for me one of the village Bibles, which with tears of joy she gave into my hand, and which I have looked into whenever I have been left alone, or whenever I expressed a wish for the quiet of undisturbed repose. My dark conclusions were, that I have more to dread than to hope, unless my life is yet spared to prove the sincerity of repentance, and my increase of a well-grounded faith in the doctrines of Scripture. Happy are they whose belief is unconditional, uncontaminated by the illusions of human reasoning, or the baneful effects of deeply-rooted prejudices. But why was not man formed a being more disposed for religion; with faculties so illumined, that neither the workings of his own imagination, nor the scoffs of infidelity, could

disturb his faith, or arrest his conviction of prophetic truths and well-attested miracles? Am I not a living instance, that such evil communications corrupt the wavering mind, and give a sanction, as it were, to every sinful pursuit?"

"My dear friend, such questions are inapplicable to the present purpose of our discourse. The returning prodigal should 'arise and go to his Father,' without the presumptuous question, Why am I not an infallible being? There can be but little doubt that you have sinned against Heaven and your own conscience; and the grand question is, how is the sin to be radically expiated? Experience has taught you, that unassisted human repentance is of little avail; that boastful resolutions of amendment, in the hour of trial or suffering, have not proceeded from heartfelt penitence. But I trust you will now take so different a view of the means vouchsafed to sanctify an entire change of heart and conduct, that whether your days are many or few, the stain of original sin, and the guilt of actual transgressions, will no more impede your progress in holiness of life, from the conviction of that sacrifice which every line in the book before us so plainly authenticates. Discard, then, for ever

discard, useless recollections of infidelity; and instead of asking why man was formed a fallible being, embrace the means which God has appointed to render him a meet partaker of the kingdom of heaven. Allow me, however, to add, that a renewal of the mind to holiness, 'a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness,' can only be acquired by cultivating the 'fruits of the Spirit;' by the subjection of evil passions; by humility, faith, and repentance; and by the practical observance of every Christian ordinance and duty. The miracle of a sudden renovation of the mind, though not impossible with God, is not in these days acquired or conferred; for although our resolutions of amendment may either be hastily formed, or the result of mature deliberation, our progress in holiness, generally speaking, must be the result of an experienced faith and a practical good life. It is not enough to cry, 'Lord, Lord,' in the hour of trial; but to do the will of our Father which is in heaven, amidst returning temptations and worldly pursuits."

"Donavan, you have touched the source of all my recent despair—it is because I feel the impracticability of evincing the deep remorse and penitence of my heart by a new and holy

life. Oh, could I live one year longer! Had I the wealth of both the Indies, how cheaply would such a purchase appear to my changed and despairing mind! I had not the plea of ignorance to excuse me on religious subjects. I once gave unlimited authenticity to all the truths of revealed religion, and intended, at some future day, practically to confess them; but from listening, I may say, to the blasphemous ridicule of the infidel, my mind became a chaos of incongruities, of doubts; and, eventually, of every species of fool-hardiness. Now answer me, Donavan, with that sincerity which the question demands—Can so late a repentance as mine, unsanctioned by any practical conviction of sin, receive the blessing of Heaven? Remember, you now stand before me as the minister of Him whose counsels and laws I have wilfully neglected; but on whose infinite mercy I wish to throw myself, though so often reduced to despair by the remembrance also of the infinity of his justice. Oh may the blessed words, 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary, and I will refresh you,' be extended to me; for truly I am weary with the burden of my sins, and long to make my peace with God."

"To limit the mercy of Heaven, would in-

deed be presumptuous. You are not now to be told how dangerous is the experiment to trust to a 'more convenient season' for the great work of reformation; but it may lead to your soul's comfort and salvation to be assured, that, as God alone can fathom the sincerity of man's repentance, he alone will judge the sinner, and receive all that come unto him in faith and penitence, embracing the means of salvation which he hath appointed, namely, the mediation and atonement of the cross. Here rests our humble hope for pardon and peace during our earthly existence. That late conversions allow no time for man to pronounce them to be sincere, is undeniable; but I repeat, God, in this, as in every other case, is the only awful Judge! And we may venture to affirm, although the Scriptures give no encouragement to a protracted or death-bed repentance, if a change of life and heart be not the mere effect of a transient terror of conscience; if the soul be touched with a full conviction of its sin and unworthiness, resting on a Saviour for pardon and acceptance, the repentance being such as would be followed by a holy and religious conduct; there is room, Willoughby, not only for hope, but humble confidence of the soul's eternal

salvation. The accident, and its consequent sufferings, may indeed prove to you an inestimable blessing. Let us believe that the ways of God are above our comprehension, and that his superintending providence will ever be the consolation of the righteous and the terror of the ungodly. You think now that you shall surely die in the midst of your age, with the vow of penitence on your lips, and the seeds of reformation in your heart; but as nothing is impossible with God, 'twice fifteen years' may yet be added to your life; think well of the responsibility you are now taking upon yourself should your days be prolonged—that the failure of your Christian duties will arise hereafter in redoubled condemnation, and your guilt be more unpardonable than the guilt of those who have not received such salutary warnings."

"This thought has not escaped my mind; and then my wish to live, is lost in higher contemplations. Under all existing and disgraceful circumstances, a long life could not be desirable. You will recollect, I only wished for time to make my peace with God and my own conscience."

"Let us also remember we are not the arbiters of our own fate, and that submission to

the will of Heaven is indispensable to probationary beings like ourselves. Your life is, doubtless, peculiarly uncertain; should you be spared to us some little time longer, think of the blessing of surrounding friends, who will hail every symptom of a returning peaceful conscience—who cannot only 'minister to a mind diseased,' but almost cheat you of bodily pain and suffering, by those dear and nameless attentions so needful on the couch of sickness, the strength and piety of whose minds will aid you in the arduous task of your well-intentioned reformation."

"Feeling as I do, in regard to life and death, it were premature to say I cannot exist to be a burden to such beloved friends. Worldly considerations should not now engage my thoughts; but, Donavan, there is a case which presses heavily on my mind: I have a wife—a wife, who, were she present, could not comprehend the feelings of the man who has so much neglected her, but who would perhaps, in childish simplicity, fly from the gloom of a darkened chamber, and lament this wound in my forehead more than the state of my wounded soul. And yet, methinks, to exchange a mutual forgiveness, to look once more on my innocent child, is

no unreasonable request. Poor Ellinor! she was indeed nature's fairest work; but, alas! when the reign of passion ended, where was the soul of sympathy on which mine could rest—where was the indulgent angel my imagination had formed, to soothe my mind to peace, and lure me to domestic happiness! But as nothing can excuse my late conduct towards her, a sincere and mutual forgiveness must be now our best consolation. How far my altered situation may work on Mr. Onslow's feelings, it is impossible to determine, inexorable as I have ever known him, where his prejudices are strong and his judgment convinced. I am persuaded, in Mr. Harcourt I shall have an able and a charitable advocate. My increasing weakness, notwithstanding I have dared to wish for a twelvemonth's longer existence, calls for a very prompt decision in regard to the means of any interesting communication with Ellinor. My still disabled arm forbids me the use of the pen, and I believe I must rest solely on you for a true statement of my wishes and helpless situation."

"Be assured, my dear friend, I will arrange all things to your satisfaction. I must now entreat you will endeavour to gain some needful repose; and I leave you with every due en-

couragement to gain that 'peace the world can neither take nor give.' Your assertions of reform are not now vehement and contradictory as heretofore; and I trust you rest upon a firmer basis than an illusive repentance, springing from disappointment or unexpected calamity. This book, which contains the sacred word and will of God, must be the anchor of our hopes. Our frequent opportunities, dear Willoughby, of renewing important subjects will not, I trust, be henceforth unprofitable.

CHAPTER IX.

Mrs. Coventry and Elizabeth hailed with gratitude the blessed omens of Willoughby's awakened mind, nor deemed it presumption to breathe a prayer to heaven, that he might live to exemplify a practical reformation. They did not weary him with incessant exhortations; nor discourage him by a vain retrospect of the past, neither did they weakly flatter him with the hope, that all his difficulties were overcome, for they well knew that the hour of temptation had hitherto led him astray, and that the hour of suffering was not the period to prove the permanency of man's repentance. His recovery was still pronounced to be very doubtful; for should the leg be restored to use and strength, and the contusions yield to medical skill, exhaustion, it was to be feared, might prove the cause of a lingering but fatal decline. Mrs. Coventry derived comfort from the thought, that Willoughby had not reached a foreign land, where he might have existed the victim of despair, or have plunged into that

sort of dissipation, disgraceful in life and fatal in death. When gazing on his pallid countenance, or performing the tender offices of nurse and mother, her heart spontaneously held that converse with heaven, which could alone soothe the anxiety of her solicitude.

When Mr. Donavan's letter reached Onslow Hall, addressed to Mr. Harcourt, stating a true account of Willoughby's health, and his wishes in regard to Ellinor and the child, the Hall exhibited a melancholy scene of the uncertainty of life and its enjoyments. Ellinor was on the bed of death, and Mr. Harcourt finishing a letter to Beech Park, to announce the sudden change that had taken place. The delicacy of her health had been recently mentioned; rapid, but insidious was the increase of her complaint, and when contemplating in the glass, the bright hectic flush of her cheek, and the wasting of her form, she exultingly assured Mrs. Randall, of her improvement in figure and beauty. Nothing could persuade her to adopt that sort of warm clothing so necessary to her really invalid state; but every evening she would be attired in the most fashionable apparel, and ridiculed the idea of increasing her cold by the exposure of her person. Mrs. Randall

had affirmed that her incessant cough was only the effects of a cold, and that while her eyes retained such peculiar brilliancy, and her spirits were so good, it was impossible she could have any serious complaints. " Besides, my dear," she would sometimes say, " you are yet too young to be hipped by a cough or a cold; your father, to be sure, does not say much, but as to that prosing Mr. Harcourt, and your cautious cousin, one would really imagine you had not an hour to live."

" How shockingly you talk, Randall, not an hour to live; some fifty years hence, there is time enough for these gentle hints. But here comes my sapient doctor. Now do ask him, Randall, if I shall not soon be well."

The physician saw in Ellinor's appearance much to apprehend, and much to fear that her complaints would become very serious, and when questioned by Mrs. Randall, he candidly stated his opinion on the subject; but Mrs. Randall, fearing to disturb the tranquillity of Ellinor's mind, replied to her enquires, " Oh, these medical men are so opinionated; it is so much their interest to lengthen a case, that you cannot wonder if he said, he would see you to-morrow, and give you a little counsel."

Whilst Mr. Onslow saw Ellinor at the head of his table, almost looking her former self, and exerting a sort of artificial spirits, he gave little credence to Mr. Harcourt's hints and opinions; and he attributed her failure of strength to only a temporary debility; and engrossed with his own pursuits, he heeded not the daily and perceptible change in her appearance. From the nature of her complaint, querulous irritability converted the common occurrences of the day into real evils. The housekeeper's inattention to some of her fancies, the very humours of her child, and the state of her favourite Bijoux, rendered her petulantly miserable. Capricious in all her fancies, though she was ordered by the physician only to breathe the air of the house, she one morning prevailed with Mrs. Randall to accompany her in the garden pony-chair beyond the limits of the village. The day had been mild and genial, but on their return, a sudden and heavy shower drenched the light garments of Mrs. Randall and Ellinor.

Soon after they came home, Ellinor was attacked with cold shiverings, which terminated in a slow consuming fever. She insisted every day on being dressed and removed to the sofa, nor appeared to have the slightest expectation

that her illness would prove fatal. Just at this period, Edward Onslow returned to his anxiously expecting wife, anticipating that a few years would restore him to his country and his friends. He felt truly shocked to see so rapid an alteration in Ellinor's appearance, but was compelled to depart at the time appointed. After taking an affectionate leave of Mr. Onslow and Mr. Harcourt, he could not fail to commiserate with the latter the awful situation of his misguided cousin, and to ask Mr. Harcourt his opinion of apprizing Ellinor of her danger, and endeavouring to arrest the progress of her worldly thoughts and future plans. Mr. Harcourt replied, " I have more than once hinted this subject to her father, who answered, ' In mercy, in common humanity, distress not the poor girl with gloomy apprehensions of the future. She has youth and a good constitution on her side: nor do I believe one word of her immediate danger. Canting, and praying, and preaching, might indeed bring on dangerous symptoms. Her mind must be kept easy, and a little cheerful amusement would be more salutary than long faces and tedious exhortations. In fact, you are all alarmed by the unfortunate cold she has taken; and notwithstanding the

doctor's opinion, I dare affirm a few days will set all to rights again.' He then vehemently execrated the conduct of Willoughby, as the primary cause of Ellinor's illness; and I found it useless, either to plead for him, or dwell on the alarming state of her health."

When Edward Onslow had taken leave of Ellinor, she romantically avowed to Mrs. Randall, her now never-ceasing repentance, that she had not been faithful to her early vows of love.

Mrs. Randall comforted her with the assurance, that few, if any, were fated to marry their first love; that although Willoughby had turned out so deceptive a character, she was happy to be blessed with so kind a father.

"And yet, after all, Randall, it is a sad fate to be doomed to pass a wretched, perhaps a long life, in this monotonous way. When little Ellinor grows up, I can tell you, I shall not be contented to be thus sequestered."

In a few minutes, she complained of increasing indisposition, and wondering what could be the matter with her, she was persuaded to recline on the sofa, to endeavour to recruit her strength and spirits; an uneasy slumber increased the hectic colour on her cheek, and

Mrs. Randall thought she had awoke refreshed, and in all respects better. She insisted on being dressed for dinner, the agitation of her pulse affording a momentary and artificial strength; but just as she was preparing to be assisted down to the dining-room, a violent fit of coughing was succeeded by a fainting fit, and she was compelled to return to the sofa. Having taken a little nourishment, she sent to request her father and Mr. Harcourt would order the wine and dessert up stairs, and come themselves, and drink her better health; that she would defer till the morrow visiting them in the dining-room. All was arranged as she wished; but ere they had been a few minutes in the room, Ellinor uttered a faint scream, and fell senseless on the sofa. Mr. Onslow imagined that a usual fainting fit had seized her, but Mr. Harcourt perceived she was gone for ever!——Vain, indeed, was every medical exertion! Mrs. Randall's loud lamentations, the secret horror depicted on Mr. Onslow's countenance, and the surprize and commiseration of the attendant servants, were alike unheeded by the lifeless Ellinor!

When composure through the house was a little restored, and Mr. Harcourt had just sealed

the before-mentioned letter for Beech Park, the postman arrived with Mr. Donavan's account of Willoughby's health, and wishes for a mutual forgiveness between Ellinor and her suffering husband.

Mr. Harcourt gave the letter into Mr. Onslow's hand, who said, after perusing it, "And this worthless fellow will recover, whilst his innocent wife is suddenly bereaved of existence, and consigned to the land where all things are forgotten. What say we now to the power of universal justice!"

"It were injudicious, Onslow, at such a season as this,—at the very moment of a shock that must rive a parent's heart, either to urge my own unchanged opinions, or endeavour to controvert your's. Your mind is just now irritated beyond control."

Mr. Onslow interrupted him, saying, "You are mistaken; I am perfectly composed. Death is common to all, and whether Ellinor rested in the tomb now, or some years hence, can be of little moment. Why she has met with so untoward a fate is an unfathomable mystery. Had she married Edward, I had been yet a happy father! That she was once my heart's darling, —the living representative of her angel mother,

I never can deny, but disappointed as I have been in the stability of her conduct, perhaps the intensity of a father's affection has been somewhat weakened. I gave her an asylum here, more from compassion than feeling, and had she ever returned to her wretched husband, these doors would have been closed against her. Oh! how I once loved her, Harcourt!" Here, in spite of all resistance, the feelings of a father overpowered those of the stoic, and he burst into tears.

Ashamed of what he termed unmanly weakness, he abruptly left the room, nor for hours would he unclose the door, to afford any necessary communication, in regard to the last arrangements for the deceased.

It may well be imagined Mr. Onslow's ruminations were not of a very enviable nature; the sudden and last silence of any being must be appalling even to indifferent spectators. Mr. Onslow felt the shock more severely than human pride would avow, but he felt it on selfish principles, not from tender or agonizing reflections on so awful a separation, or irremediable anxiety at the future fate of an ignorant and thoughtless being. He himself might die sud-

denly, and all the horrors of the grave, and of annihilation stood before him. His vast possessions, houses, land, the luxuries and comforts of this mortal existence would not arrest his fated hour, and "why was I born to pay the penalty of death?" burst from his desponding bosom.

Thought rushed upon thought, all conducing to work up his mind to that sort of desperation, which, though so often experienced by the decided infidel, in the hour of privacy and trial, mocks the power of language accurately to describe.

As the violent emotions of an ill-regulated mind are, generally speaking, of short duration, he relapsed into constitutional insensibility, and though he talked of fortitude, he was the prey to the weakest cowardice. On the next day he entreated Mr. Harcourt would take all necessary arrangements on himself; and sedulously avoided the chamber of death, and even the apartments that led to it. He endeavoured to amuse his mind by the perusal of works of fancy, or of the authors, whose writings were in unison with his own opinions and sentiments.

The bitter disappointment that Ellinor had

not left a boy to inherit his estates and fortune, almost made him dread the sound of the infantine voice of his little grand-daughter; and once hearing her scream to go to mamma, as he was wandering through the retired walks in the garden, worked up his mind to agony. What then were his sensations when he beheld the child running towards him, lisping his name, and artlessly inquiring for her mother?"

There is something in the voice of childhood that can soften the hardest heart. Mr. Onslow would have lifted her in his arms, but she, with kicks and screams, unfortunately repulsed the transiently awakened tenderness; and Mr. Harcourt and the servant approaching, he gave the child to their care, and plunged into the adjacent solitary path.

"The girl should go to her father," was his immediate resolve, "his future days should not be continually embittered, nor his memory refreshed, by a little being, who could neither yield him pleasure nor comfort." The unconscious blessing he was pronouncing, proved hereafter of momentous value to the petted Ellinor. Mrs. Randall's grief was oppressive

to all around her, continually recurring to the dear creature's unmerited sufferings, and working herself up to paroxysms of loud and unavailing lamentations. Nothing could persuade her to approach the coffin of Ellinor; she never had seen a corpse, and she was sure she should become one herself, were she to enter the chamber of death.

How different were the ruminations and conduct of Mr. Harcourt in contemplating the last remains of a frail and once beauteous creature. The hopes and conjectures of a Christian spirit alternately agitated his mind, and he sometimes blamed himself for not having endeavoured to arouse Ellinor's mind to a due sense of her awful situation; then remembering her perverted education—her ignorance on religious subjects—the fallible examples she had ever associated with, and the sacrifice of her whole time to the vanities, if not to the vices of the world, he was too well convinced that exhortation would have been unheeded, and the tenour of the Gospel little understood. Distressed as he was by the apparent insensibility of Mr. Onslow, and regarding him as the primary cause of Ellinor's failings, he felt

convinced this was not the period, either to persuade by argument, or to convict by reason; and he could only trust, that as old age and infirmity would soon advance, his boasted stability would be weakened.

CHAPTER X.

A FEW hours before Mr. Harcourt's letter had reached Beech Park, containing the full account of the late melancholy event, Willoughby had been much shocked by reading in the newspaper the death of his late unprincipled companion Mr. Sedley. Intoxication had proved the cause of an apparently trifling accident, which from neglect and want of care, at length brought him to the grave.

Willoughby was deeply affected; reduced by continued indisposition to the extreme of debility, he was little calculated to bear any unforeseen or sudden shock; and though it could not be imagined he suffered by a personal regard towards a man who had deliberately perverted his mind, and ruined his fortune; yet, when Willoughby considered the almost sudden exit of such a deluded being as Sedley, with the weight of unrepented sins on his head, and that there is no repentance in the grave;—when he reflected how often he himself had termed inebriety, good fellowship,

and debased his rational nature below the brutes that perish; when he thought what escapes from danger he must have experienced, and above all, when his late preservation from a violent and immediate death, agitated his mind, he instinctively prayed that lengthened days might not eventually lead him into temptation.

The look that passed between Mr. Donavan and Mrs. Coventry, after reading the account of Sedley's death, was unnoted by Willoughby, who would otherwise have been convinced that no slight occurrence could have depicted such solicitude on their countenance.

Mrs. Coventry gave Willoughby his usual restorative draught, and after a little general conversation on the premature end of his once erring companion, she persuaded him to endeavour to gain a little rest on the couch in his own apartment. Mr. Donavan had that morning received Mr. Harcourt's despatches from Beech Park, and they feared till Willoughby felt a little recruited, to make the necessary disclosure of Ellinor's death. Mrs. Coventry watched by him while he slumbered, and knowing that the intelligence could not be delayed, she in a

few hours, with all a mother's tenderness, broke to him the unexpected news.

The debility of his frame had so contributed to weaken the faculties of Willoughby's mind, that the sudden and awful death of a being he had once most fondly loved, overwhelmed his spirits, and brought on unfavourable symptoms of increasing indisposition. A low fever rendered him for some weeks more helpless than a child, the effects of the contusions again alarmed the medical attendants, and he once more arose from the bed of suffering, even the shadow of his former self.

Mr. Harcourt had faithfully narrated to Mr. Donavan all that had necessarily occurred at Onslow Hall. The shock and surprise of Ellinor's death gradually subsided—the bustle of the funeral over,—the house seemed to resume its usual habits; and the bereaved child was soon consoled by the novelty of sable habiliments, and shining jet clasps to her new black shoes.

Mr. Harcourt had greater influence over Mr. Onslow than any human being, nor did he omit the judicious opportunity of endeavouring to tranquillize his feelings, and to lead him to

exalted subjects. But as these opportunities very seldom occurred, he could only grieve and lament Mr. Onslow's deeply rooted prejudices; and, that a being formed for immortality should reject the means vouchsafed by the great Creator to forward the glorious and consoling hope.

Mr. Harcourt had protracted his stay in Somersetshire beyond his own convenience, but at length the day was fixed for his departure, and he had kindly offered to travel up to town with little Ellinor and her maid, and to place her in the safe protection of her anxiously expecting grandmother. The child's indulged habits and turbulence of temper often disturbed the whole house, even Mrs. Randall began to be tired of her humours, and was meditating a visit where she had formerly been invited, to Ellinor's favourite friend, the once lively and thoughtless Louisa Harrington. She chose to forget her late contemptible behaviour, and had written a pathetic and prolix account of Ellinor's death, and of her own intention to accept of a former, but most friendly invitation, to witness her splendour and happiness.

After impatiently waiting, and conjecturing the reason of not having an answer to her let-

ter, what was Mrs. Randall's surprise to receive the following laconic epistle from Louisa's husband.

" Madam,

" Your letter was duly received, I am under the necessity of informing you that Lady Morton sees no company, and I remain,

" Madam,

" Your very humble Servant,

" Thomas Morton."

Louisa's volatile disposition, and total disregard of her husband's customs and opinions, soon cooled the ardour of his attachment, and her imprudent boasts and indirect hints and communications of the offers she had rejected, her impassioned manner when she spoke of Mr. Sedley, aided by some chance reports of their former intimacy, and her coquetry to casual visitors, converted the baronet's vague suspicions to decided and uncontrollable jealousy. The demon of discord haunted their social hours, and he watched her with that unceasing and scrutinizing attention, which could not fail to render Louisa imprudently in-

dignant, and insolently provoking. She had long imagined Sedley had forgotten all his former vows of everlasting love, but felt afraid sometimes, that the return of her written promise of marriage, subject to a pecuniary remuneration, might prove to her of very serious consequence. One morning, as the discordant pair were differing over a recent occurrence, which led to accusations of the lady's volatile behaviour, and threats of an abridgement of her usual liberty, the servant brought in the newspaper. Sir Thomas, too angry even to prose over the accustomed regale, continued to pace the room in violent agitation. Insolent and listless, Louisa was attempting to scan the paper, when the paragraph announcing Sedley's death caught her eye. A scream of horror and surprise, and an unguarded exclamation, induced her husband to look on the part of the paper on which her countenance was fixed. "Here is indeed confirmation strong as holy writ, of your shameful attachment, perhaps criminality to another, whilst you were cajoling me with your blandishments, and taking heaven to witness that I——" Here he was interrupted by the hysterical cries of Louisa, and compelled to ring for assistance; and, when in

some degree recovered, giving him a look of ineffable contempt, she sought the silence of her own apartment, to meditate on the ill usage she was enduring from her husband. Sedley, was certainly the object of her romantic regard, but weak, and vain, and volatile, she could not resist the splendour of Sir Thomas Morton's fortune, nor the eclât of an empty sounding title. He was many years her senior, and as she took little care after marriage, to keep alive the flame which he thought would ever light him to domestic happiness, his astonishment at her deceptive character, led to all the miseries of fruitless jealousy; and having heard some vague reports of her intimacy with Sedley, her agitated exclamation when she read the fatal paragraph, combined to make him realize some plan, for at least, a temporary confinement. Resolves once formed, no human power could change; by nature, weak and obstinate, and irritated beyond endurance, by Louisa's injudicious reproaches, he himself became her jailor, opened all her letters, was her only companion when he forced her into the garden or the carriage, and by his equally injudicious severity, caused her hereafter to elude by criminality, all his care and forethought; and

hence the laconic answer Mrs. Randall received to her self-inviting letter.

Willoughby recovered slowly, but his mind appeared to gain in strength what his body had lost. He spoke of Sedley's death, with tolerable firmness, and was soon able to converse with Mr. Donavan, on now, to him, the most interesting of all subjects,—the truths of Revelation, and the certainty of a future state of existence. His reflections on the death of Ellinor, were becoming more rational; for though, even at first, he could not pretend to lament her, with all the regret of an attached and affectionate husband, there were times when he thought of her, as in the early days of courtship, radiant in beauty, living but in his presence, and braving every censure to become his wife. His own unpardonable conduct might have accelerated the uncongeniality of their minds, and he thought, had she been spared to make her peace with Heaven and himself, he should have felt comparatively happy.

"Oh, my mother," would he say, "could I recall some periods of my past life! had I made more allowance for Ellinor! useless retrospection! Dearest mother, you cannot listen to my

protestations of reform, for what resolves and vows have I not broken."

"But, heretofore, Willoughby, your resolutions were the result of disappointment, not penitence; I now trust, they spring from a better source: a conviction that the influence of religious principles is the surest means to strengthen the weakness of our nature, and to induce us, on all occasions, to act with consistency of conduct."

One of these oft-repeated conversations was interrupted by the arrival of the little expected stranger from Onslow Hall. Mr. Harcourt, faithful to his promise, had accompanied the young traveller to town, and placed her safely under Mrs. Coventry's protection. She had been as troublesome during the journey, as humoured children generally are, and some days passed, before she would leave her nurse's side, and repulsed every affectionate endearment from her father. By judicious management, she became reconciled to his invalid appearance, and amused by the playful indulgences of her young companions, Lord Charles and Elizabeth.

CHAPTER XI.

For many months, the fluctuating state of Willoughby's health, and his extreme debility, excited all Mrs. Coventry's anxious solicitude, and she lamented to observe, that his repentance was too often tinctured with that despair, which a thorough conversion of the mind can alone counteract and eventually conquer.

As he became more convalescent, he also became more solicitous to prove the stability of his resolutions; and one evening, feeling better and more animated than usual, he started from a reverie, and exclaimed to Mr. Donavan and Mrs. Coventry, who were with him, and engaged in conversation,—"I can no longer live a life of idleness: What can I say to you, my dearest mother, for your unwearied patience and affectionate care during my late tedious confinement?

"What can I express to you, my invaluable friend, for preparing my soul to receive the knowledge, and the consolations of true religion? How far I have hitherto profited, by

the warnings and admonitions I have received, time, I trust, may favourably determine. At present, conscience too forcibly suggests, that I have not yet given one proof of the change that is wrought in my heart, in my opinions, and in my sentiments. You will not permit me to say, I live a burden on you, my dearest mother, but surely inactivity is the prelude to many visionary ills, and I can scarcely rein in my impatience, to endeavour to prove to you my gratitude and filial affection. I have had many plans in review, and, perhaps, a very few years' absence from my country, might enable me to afford you all the luxuries of life."

Mrs. Coventry, contemplating his yet altered countenance, replied,—

"For your good, I could sacrifice more than I am able to express: I aim not at argument to controvert the fallacy of your opinion and wishes to leave the country; but, Willoughby, of this I am assured, that the day on which you thus separate yourself from me, will shut out every gleam of cheerfulness from my mind, and render the remainder of my days so dreary a blank, that, in all human probability, our parting would be very long and very fatal."

"Dearest mother, I will do nothing with-

out your consent."—"I must, Willoughby, have your sacred promise, that you will not leave the country: you well know of how little value I consider the luxuries of life, and see that blooming cherub sporting on the grass; she will probably inherit the riches of her grandfather; no good can accrue to her by your absence, but a relaxation of those parental and filial ties, which of late have so delightfully strengthened."

"Indeed, Willoughby," Mr. Donavan said, "it is my decided opinion, that the objections to your leaving this country are despotic and unanswerable. I perfectly agree with you, that an entire seclusion from the world cannot prove the sincerity of your present resolutions: occupation is the duty of every man, and the various channels which time and consideration may be productive of, will honourably engage and fill up your time; affording you also leisure to cheer and solace the mind of the best of mothers; you hinted the other day, how arduous would be the task to brave the comments or the ridicule of an indiscriminating world; I will only observe, there is more true courage in maintaining your opinions, and pursuing a determined rectitude of conduct, than

in flying your country, and plunging into ills and temptations which you know not of, and which might eventually weaken your sacred contract with Heaven, and lessen your present interest in all the domestic and social duties of life. But, Willoughby, if I know your heart, I think, the inquietude of your mother's present feelings, and the undeviating affection, she has evinced under all existing circumstances, will speak more forcibly on the subject, than any arguments I can offer. Believe me, you are scarcely yet sufficiently recovered to combat unnecessary difficulties, or to suffer from an enervating climate, even should you be blest with a continuance of mental stability."

Mrs. Coventry wrung the hand of her son, and meaning to leave the room, she said,—"I am oppressed with such a variety of emotions, that I can no longer trust myself to lengthen this most interesting conference:—my dearest son, attend to the counsel of our invaluable friend, and Heaven grant, that some decision may be prompt and satisfactory. Though my heart were to break, Willoughby, I cannot urge the authority of a parent, I can only remind you of her affectionate solicitude from your birth, even to this very hour; and that the

society and happiness of her children, can alone soothe the remnant of her widowed days to peace."

"Oh, stay, my dear mother," Willoughby answered, "and hear me solemnly declare, that all my future plans shall be regulated by your counsel. I now distrust my own judgment, and am endeavouring to subdue that impetuosity of temper and decision, which has heretofore so often led me astray."

Mrs. Coventry affectionately softened his self-accusations, with a more lightened heart, from Willoughby's promise not to leave the country on visionary plans; and her absence led the two friends to a conversation interesting and soothing to both parties.

Donavan, after briefly recapitulating the evidences of Christianity, from the early ages of prophecy, to the demonstration of miracles; observed the peculiar thoughtfulness of Willoughby's mind, and for some time, endeavoured to arouse him to a right sense of the importance of the subject.

Willoughby, at length, exclaimed, "It is surprizing, if such be the truth and plainness of the case, that infidelity is not oftener con-

futed, that the whole world is not a world of Christianity."

"We are taught by the Gospel, that though the seed be good, thorns and briars will impede its progress to perfection. There are hearts so hardened and deluded by the riches, the enjoyments, or the trials of life, that they wish not to know what would disturb their pleasures or their opinions. In pressing the truths of futurity on the worldly minded, we often meet with inattention or contempt; nor till the prospect of death opens the fatal approach of judgment, is the counsellor attended to, 'charm he never so wisely.'"

"Donavan, you touch me nearly, how often had I presumptuously braved death, when health, and youth, and strength, seemed to place the evil at an immeasurable distance; and I can never too often bless God who made me, for that revolution in my feelings; when every painful breath I drew, threatened to be my last; when the awful invitation of my Saviour, to flee to him for refreshment, agitated my hitherto stubborn mind."

"My dear friend, it is an unwarrantable love of this world, and the pride of life, which

darken the heart, and obscure the light of Heaven; let resolution, through the assistance of God's Holy Spirit, remove the barrier, and the mental vision of fallible man, will clearly see the dangers by which he has been environed. God has promised to give heavenly wisdom only, to those who ask it faithfully, and confirm their sincerity by a practical observance of the duties of a Christian life; far be it from me to paint a gloomy, or an unnecessarily difficult task for the truly penitent to accomplish: had good men never existed, had depravity never been reformed, had the prodigal never returned with penitence to his father's house, you, with other innumerable instances of self-condemnation, might drag out a painful existence, conscious of sin, without the power of a radical obliteration. You, Willoughby, are not now to be taught, that 'the way, the truth, and the life,' are to be obtained through one only mediation; obtained, by bending that portion of free-will that is allowed us, to the influence and assistance of God's Holy Spirit. Were this world our 'only continuing city,' such assertions might be termed words of mere declamation, and good conduct only necessary for the sake of a praiseworthy example; but,

if the word of God be true,—if a Saviour died for penitent sinners, and rose again for universal justification, the path of unfeigned repentance is open to all."

Mr. Donavan, after many conferences with Willoughby, in which he frequently alluded to the necessity of confirming his resolutions at the holy table of his Redeemer, finally convinced him of the folly of procrastination, and the delusions of those common-place arguments which had agitated his mind;—and the next Sunday, happening to be Easter-day, Mrs. Coventry accompanied her beloved son into the immediate presence of God, and never with more grateful reverence satisfied her own vows to Heaven, from the blessed hope of Willoughby's heartfelt penitence, and restoration to rectitude and peace. Mr. Donavan's eloquent and impressive manner peculiarly touched the hearts of many; and without the slightest personal allusion, his discourse on that day was too firmly impressed on Willoughby's mind, ever to be forgotten.

Willoughby, during the evening, more than once, mentioned, with feelings of deep regret, poor Ellinor's state of mind in her last hour. "I was, it is true, but a sorry Mentor,

yet had I seen the woman to whom I was united, strict in her Christian duties, I might have been led to think more seriously; but when I hinted this idea to poor mistaken Ellinor, she only answered, 'I hope never to become a methodist.'" The death also of his unbaptized child, was a source of uneasiness, and it required every kind attention, from his anxious friends, to prevent a return of that nervous inquietude, from which he had lately recovered.

As time passed on, Willoughby was every day more sensible of his changed and happy situation; his health improved,—his mental faculties invigorated, he became anxious for some suitable employment, thereby to render himself a more useful member of society; many plans were in agitation, nor did Mrs. Coventry weakly object to some temporary separations, well knowing that untried resolutions of an amended conduct were no proof of their stability.

In a few months Willoughby had determined to follow his former nominal profession, the law. He had chambers in town, and was enabled, by the assistance of a partner, to spend part of every week with Mrs. Coventry and his

other friends. Mr. Vincent's affluent fortune and liberal mind, with every necessary arrangement, had restrained his pecuniary embarrassments and debts in a proper compass, having discharged the most pressing in his usual delicate and brotherly manner, and Willoughby pursued his new avocation with interest and success. The high character his father had ever sustained was well known to many of his present associates, and the most lenient made every allowance for Willoughby's former idle and inactive conduct, and all were pleased with his society and interesting manners. The former enemy to his peace and well doing, Mr. Sedley, could no more tempt the unwary to ruin; and Willoughby continued to shun that society which had nearly plunged him into irretrievable misery. He was sometimes compelled to listen to heartless congratulations on his amended prospects, and contemptible allusions to what was termed pardonable failings; and when some of his own and Sedley's intimates seemed to expect his return to jovial parties, midnight revels, and gambling meetings, he firmly stood his ground against all the raillery and pretended witticisms they levelled against him—"that he would turn anchorite or methodist; that he was

under motherly government; that he was once a fine spirited fellow, and had been scared by a sick room and a few bruises;" excited both their pity and their ridicule.

In answer to one of Donavan's letters on business, Willoughby thus concludes, after having endured a chance meeting at a neighbouring coffee-house with a trio of his former associates:—

"Donavan, when I review my former self, may I not without presumption affirm I feel indeed a new creature? I must candidly avow, that when I first encountered the beings on whom I was once dependent for the abuse of time and talent, I felt the difficulty of bearing with manly firmness even the ridicule of fools. A solemn demeanour I knew would only increase their merriment, and therefore, in a half serious manner, I told them 'I was now a man of business; that I had tried the profession of a man of pleasure, and wished them more happiness and success than I had met with; that I had an appointment which could not be dispensed with, and must therefore wish them good morning.' A loud laugh, and the assertion that I should yet 'come round,' unnerved me more than I wished; but I am now so ac-

customed to idle remarks and unprincipled opinions, whenever by chance I meet with these joyous spirits, that I feel I can with dignified composure listen to their ribaldry, and thankfully shun all intimate association. I too well know the nature of fixed and rooted vicious habits, not to know that even your former excellent counsel and scriptural instructions were often laid aside with the letter that contained them. Dear-bought experience of life's frivolity, and trials, appointed by the Ruler of all events, may convince the infidel or convert the erring; and you will agree with me in that trite and common assertion, that 'example is often more prevailing than precept.' It is not for me, Donavan, to lash the follies of the age, to harangue on the sin of mis-spending time and talent; and if the depth of depravity be avoided, to live, as a puppet of the hour, as a being only calculated to ride and drive, or to measure the fashionable lounge of the day. It is not for me to condemn with asperity what I once too hardily practised; but I can never be too grateful to feel that I utterly despise those frivolities and scenes which were once the business of my life —that the power of intellectual occupation can interest my mind, and give zest to that limited

recreation which neither reason nor religion disallows. Oh! how were my benighted faculties hidden, when such a man as my excellent father could not call them into action. Often do I now muse on the parental counsel his anxiety offered, the unmerited indulgences he bestowed on an unworthy son; often do I call to mind the vows I breathed over his honoured remains, and of the shameful breach of all that was estimable in man.

"Bear with me, Donavan, in these retrospections; I ought yet to feel acutely errors which no time can obliterate, though repentance may wash away their stain.

"Again and again, I also ruminate on poor Ellinor's life and death. Oh! could I have now returned to the bosom of domestic peace! But it is presumptuous to arraign my fate. Poor Ellinor! we were mutually deceived: the despotic reign of passion clouded my mental vision, and infringed every law of hospitality and kindness; whilst she, bewildered with the senseless jargon of romance, imagined herself a pattern of constancy in my unworthy favour. Had I considered her erroneous education, had I looked beyond present self-gratification, I should have shunned even the fairest form that love

and beauty could array. I have gazed sometimes on my little Ellinor's countenance, so like her poor mother's; I have contemplated every promise of the same symmetry of her infant form; till the spontaneous petition of my heart to Heaven has been, to guard her from vain delusions, and lead her through religion's path to peace. I can never be too thankful that she is under my mother's care, and shares with my sister's child every salutary instruction. And what an alteration have a few months already produced! Instead of the little humoured pet, screaming in her nurse's arms, or frightened into silence by ignorant and vulgar threats; instead of a countenance pallid from hurtful indulgences, or flushed with infantine passions; with all a father's hopes, I anticipate the now interesting and healthy child may continue to brighten in her progress through life, the ornament of her sex, and a faithful steward of the large fortune she will probably inherit. It is not likely, Donavan, that I shall ever again venture in the lottery of marriage: once deceived, or rather self-deceived, maturity of age often arrives before the dread of an unwise choice can be conquered, before passion can put to flight the suggestions of reason.

"I sometimes wish Miss Brudenel had a heart disengaged, because I think she might have interested your's; nor will you term this a romantic or inconsistent idea, after my own declaration, if you allow that our cases are very different, and that it is almost your duty to live in the bosom of domestic happiness, that you may extend around you the now necessarily limited circle of your example and benevolence. As Miss Brudenel's prospects in life are so fair, I know you will wish me to end the subject, with every kind hope of their being ultimately realized. I owe much to her sisterly attentions during my long confinement; and truly rejoice to hear her beloved friend, as she always terms him, is shortly expected from India on leave of absence. She is an invaluable associate to my sister; and, as I have discovered her home is not very comfortable from a variety of causes, it is a mutual blessing that they can enjoy so much of one another's society."

Willoughby then concludes with lamenting that business of importance will detain him the whole of the week in town, avowing that every absence from what he now considers home and true enjoyment, is no trifling self-denial.

CHAPTER XII.

Miss Brudenel had alternately experienced the fluctuation of hopes and fears that every post would bring the wished-for intelligence of her dear friend's arrival. When with the Vincents, her mind was hushed to peace by the rational tenour of every day's employment, and the well-timed innocent recreations or pursuits of leisure hours: but within the circle of her own home, a casual observer might be convinced all did not dwell together in unity; and, as is often the case, a great breach of domestic comfort originated in the errors of one individual. Mr. Brudenel was a good-natured every-day character, liked his own way, but for the sake of peace was often induced to act against his better judgment: he now and then attended the parish church for the sake of example; but with the service of the morning, all ideas of religion seemed to be dismissed till the returning Sunday. Mrs. Brudenel's health was in a precarious state: she generally passed her mornings in her own apartment, and had often

felt hurt that her favourite daughter, Maria Brudenel, would not devote her whole time and attention to a mother's comfort. Much, indeed, she might have contributed towards soothing a querulous temper, and softening the languor of indisposition; but Maria, unfortunately, had been led away by those erroneous doctrines which inculcate faith as the only means of salvation, and preaching and praying the whole business of a believer's life. Her father contented himself with affirming she would soon be tired of such over-righteousness; and provided he enjoyed his own comforts, little heeded the jargon of Maria's language, or the pity and contempt she openly expressed for her sister. Miss Brudenel had been long engaged to her absent friend; and sometimes, when innocently gazing on his much-loved resemblance, she had been interrupted by her sister's harsh admonitions and presumptuous warnings.

"Indeed, Maria," she once answered, "you do me injustice; I ever 'rejoice with trembling;' but I should ill deserve the mercies of God, and the blessings with which I am surrounded, if I were to encourage gloomy anticipations of the future, and doubt a continuance of his protection. You call this dear miniature my idol,

and say, I shall be severely judged for letting it divide my heart with God: now, my dear girl, as our opinions on certain subjects are so dissimilar, let us wave altercation, and live as sisters."

"I cannot see a sister in a perilous condition without endeavouring to snatch her as a firebrand out of the fire. Be assured, you depend too much upon your own righteousness for salvation, and think, because clothed with the 'filthy rags' of charitable works, you may not be doomed to perdition. Oh! had you heard our preacher last Sabbath evening descant upon this subject, you would surely ever flee to where the Gospel is preached, and not listen to moral essays which disgrace your pulpits."

"I will hear you with patience, dear Maria, and only say I am contented, nay, glory in the doctrines of the Established Church; and think there exists not a better man nor Christian than our estimable pastor, Mr. Donavan."

"He may be very well in his way; but the true light has certainly not yet broken in upon him. It is only the elect that can be converted; nor will all our endeavours avail, if we have not been predestined to salvation."

"Forbear, Maria; I will not listen to such a

perversion of truth. I wish you would talk to Mr. Donavan, for I really am incompetent to argue with you."

"I would talk to any one with Christian boldness;—and see you not the difference of our feelings? You shrink from the contest, whilst I am confident God would put into my mind arguments befitting the glorious endeavour to convert the self-righteous to holiness."

Miss Brudenel said, with a smile, "What, without their being predestined to eternal life? My dear sister, you contradict yourself."

"The sneers of the ignorant and unbelieving we must receive with meekness. It is quite owing to your not having, through the grace of God, received the truth, that you cannot comprehend the nature of your lost condition. Once brought upon your knees to lament the vileness of your nature, the sin of having a heart of stone, acknowledging the wickedness of the vanities of life, and your own proneness to all that is evil, you would become a new creature, be blessed with a 'heart of flesh,' and despise the pleasures and amusements of a deceitful world."

Miss Brudenel was, during this conference, preparing to dress, in order to dine and sleep at Mr. Vincent's; and expecting to meet a se-

lect party in the evening, she was in the very act of taking from its case a beautiful string of pearls to confine her redundant hair, when Maria exclaimed, "Poor child of vanity! What saith the Scripture? That 'a meek and quiet spirit should be our only ornament.' When, when shall I see you throw aside Satan's devices, which lure the unwary in the form of the follies of this wicked world? For how much would those trinkets sell, and buy instruction and relief to the poor, the halt, the maimed, and the blind!"

At this instant a servant informed Miss Brudenel of an accident that had happened to a neighbouring cottager, and brought also a message from Mrs. Brudenel to the fair enthusiast, that she wished her company in a little drive round the park.

Miss Brudenel immediately threw on a shawl to accompany the sorrowing child to the scene of distress. Maria also prepared to go out—but contented herself with sending a message to her mother, "that the school she attended required her presence, and that she had an appointment to meet the minister there, for the better explanation of a particular chapter in the Bible."

" My mistress is very poorly, young ladies," the girl modestly replied.

Converting the meaning of every text of Scripture to her own limited understanding, Maria settled with her conscience, it was no crime to leave father or mother for righteousness sake, and sending a message to her invalid parent, pursued her intended plan.

Miss Brudenel paused a moment, and then enquiring the nature of the accident, felt assured an hour would make little difference in regard to her own personal attendance; and having empowered her kind-hearted Mary to administer every species of relief, she immediately sought her mother to accompany her in the drive.

As she entered the room she heard her say, " God help me!—it was not thus I neglected my children in their infancy or illness." And although somewhat disappointed in not seeing her favourite Maria by her side, was soon cheered with the attentions of her considerate companion.

Mrs. Brudenel had never spoken so openly, and seldom so kindly: she avowed that Maria's secession from domestic duties was hardly to be tolerated; that she left a mother to the care of

servants, for the employment of publicly instructing vagrant children; that she had attempted to curtail the usual expenditure of the house for purposes which might be very good, but certainly for the future should neither be encouraged by her father or herself; adding, "I well know how wretched she makes home to you, my dear girl, and I am glad you spend so much time with Mrs. Vincent; but never mind, William may soon arrive and you will have a comforter.

"It was indeed an evil day when Maria visited at the house of her school-fellow, for from that period we may date all her visionary fancies. I think religion should make us good-tempered and patient; but I declare your sister cannot bear the least contradiction of any of her extravagant notions; and if I ask her to read anything to soothe away my pain, she answers, she never reads but in her Bible."

Miss Brudenel endeavoured to excuse her sister's conduct, by urging that self-deception, not a wish to act unkindly, influenced her mind; and soon after, in the silence of her own apartment, she painfully reviewed the present and future consequences of being led away from the pure doctrines and reasonable service of the church.

On the following day she opened her whole mind to Mrs. Vincent; which could not fail to give rise to a natural agitation of spirits, and Mr. Donavan happening to call in at the moment, she entreated Mrs. Vincent to acquaint him with the cause of her uneasiness.

After listening with great kindness and attention, he said, "I will not plead ignorance, my dear Miss Brudenel, on the subject; I have painfully marked your sister's altered opinions, and have more than once endeavoured to persuade her they are incorrectly founded. What I chiefly lament in the conduct of fanaticism is, a total want of consistency. Hence the moral and relative duties of life are neglected, for the excitement and publicity of endeavouring to convert, to reprove, and perhaps to reform the errors of a stranger; whilst the more unobtrusive occupations of a Christian—attention to parents, to children, or to friends; the confinement of a sick chamber, household cares, and forbearance of temper under contradiction; are not in the list of Christian duties, nor the practical observance of them imagined necessary, by the well-meaning but deluded mind.

"I will not here touch upon the absurd doctrine, that faith alone is necessary to salvation;

faith, which is not productive of good works, kind affections, and benevolent practices, is not the faith which Christianity inculcates."

Miss Brudenel here said—"Though I utterly condemn the opinions my sister has encouraged, truth obliges me to avow she has sometimes disturbed my mind, by her vehement exhortations, by her absolutely pronouncing, that I am yet in a state of reprobation, and that unless I will acknowledge I am the vilest sinner upon earth, I never can expect that important change, which alone will fit me for the blessing of a heavenly call. I hope I am so firmly fixed in my own religious opinions that nothing can weaken them; but indeed it is lamentable to hear denunciations from a sister, whose religion has estranged her from domestic comfort, and nearly from all domestic intercourse. Certainly, to clothe the naked, or to feed the hungry, takes up a very limited portion of her time. In your well regulated and respectable schools, she says the children are taught to follow worldly occupations too much; and the little vagrants which have of late been collected together every returning Sunday, I am persuaded listen to what they cannot comprehend, and are solely attracted by the novelty of being taught to sing psalms, and

promised rewards for their punctual attendance."

"There is some truth in what you have stated, nor do I know a better method to counteract such divisions in a parish, than that the officiating minister and every rational inhabitant, should vie with self-created preachers, in earnest and active attention to the spiritual instruction and bodily necessities of the surrounding poor. Your sister, I must repeat, is misled, and is taught to dwell only on those texts of Scripture which seem to sanction her practice: whereas, if she impartially reviewed the whole volume of inspiration, she would find that the apostles all agree and meet at the same point, namely, that faith and good works never can be disunited; I should rather say, ought not to be separated. I lament to observe, that some individuals of my parish, whilst they are at all times and seasons visiting the poor, and strenuously preferring petitions to every intimate and casual visitor, nay wearying even the well-intentioned, by ceaseless importunities on the subject; exhibiting garments and ornamental trifles for sale, and descanting on the gratification of 'going about doing good,' attend the weekly service of the church, only when convenience suits; nor ever,

by yet more solemn evidences of faith, exemplify its union with their boasted practice of good works.—Think me not unnecessarily severe, but it is this species of inconsistency I sincerely deplore."

"Oh, sir!—pray talk to my sister; she has a good heart, and her misled judgment has only encouraged her errors."

"It is not often I am called upon to tell a young lady she is 'righteous over much,' nor indeed, strictly speaking, do I think it is possible for any one to be so; but, as I have more than once observed, inconsistency mars the best intentions."

At this instant Sir James Osborn, with his train of dogs, was viewed at a little distance, hastening towards the house.

Miss Brudenel said—"What a provoking interruption!"

"Really, my dear," Mrs. Vincent replied, "we have so long trespassed on Mr. Donavan's time, that we ought not to lament the cause that will relieve him from such determined enquirers as we are."

"The language of compliment, my dear madam, must not be expected from me, nor were it generous to pay you one, at the expence of the

very many triflers of the present day, who term all religious conversation, Methodism; who live as if their beauteous and fragile forms were to remain coeval with time, and had no other pursuits than the fashion of the hour,—but you will say the preacher is growing uncharitable, and——

"Indeed, sir," Mrs. Vincent interrupted, "you shall not say for us what never could have past in our minds; and I fear the guest who is nearly at our door, will not permit you to confine the accusation of frivolity to our sex."

"That young man is much to be pitied, by not having a mind formed either by education or example, to use well the talents committed to his care."

Miss Brudenel arose to leave the room; Mrs. Vincent gently detained her, saying,

"Nay, my dear, do not make his presence of such consequence. The fact is, Mr. Donavan, Sir James so good humouredly persecutes my poor friend with his admiration and disappointed views, that she has not always spirits to stand his raillery; but thus supported, you shall not fly from us: you know he terms you, inexorably constant, nor do we fear you will give up the character.

"Before Sir James opens the door, let me ask you, Mr. Donavan, if you have heard why my brother does not visit us this week; and pray tell me, do you think his stability of mind will now remain unshaken?"

"I have no doubt of his stability of conduct, because his reformation is founded on a sure and permanent basis,—on the principles of that religion which though once unfortunately superseded by deistical opinions, were never forgotten nor derided. Besides, he doubts himself, and that I take to be the surest presage of a continued exemplary conduct."

Sir James Osborn now entered the room; his boisterous good humour, and half tragic lamentations, to Miss Brudenel, of his disappointment because of her engagements to another; his transitions to the subject of hunting, horses, and dogs; his earnestly asking her, if the lucky Prince of the East, had not been before-hand with him, whether he himself would have been rejected,—excited from all parties the courteous and the impatient reply.

"Upon my soul," Sir James continued, "I never saw any woman before that I could think of marrying; yet I am determined not to die of love, and with all my misery at heart, I wish you

were married to that lucky absent fellow; so, my dear girl, let us be friends:—all very proper, *that* you know—hey, Doctor?"

Then looking out of the window, and calling his dogs to order, he began an elaborate praise of a peculiar favourite; half whispering to himself—"my wife should have had the gentlest hunter in the kingdom, to accompany us in the chase"—and soon took leave, peculiarly to the relief of Miss Brudenel.

Mrs. Vincent remarked, that to be annoyed by the attentions of such a man as Sir James Osborn was not consistent with her friend's well regulated mind, that——

Miss Brudenel interrupted her, saying, "It is hardly possible to help being annoyed by the attentions of such a man. If I laugh at him, he is encouraged by my good humour; if I am grave, he talks of dear William in too familiar a manner; yet all this I could bear; but, if he presumes to rally me, or to appear so boisterously intimate, when my dear absent friend arrives, he will not brook it. Trifles 'light as air,' encourage jealousy, and if William has a fault, he is too tenacious of my undivided regard."

This was said in a low voice to Mrs. Vincent;

and Mr. Donavan catching the import of Miss Brudenel's uneasiness, as he wished them good morning, kindly counselled the latter never to anticipate evil.

CHAPTER XIII.

The children were a constant source of comfort and interest to their affectionate relatives and friends. Lord Charles gave every promise of becoming all that his anxious protector could anticipate; the striking resemblance he bore to his ever tenderly remembered mother, naturally gave rise to various and painful retrospections; but Mr. Donavan's mind was too richly stored, and too firmly poised, to indulge in weak regrets, or criminally to judge on the decrees of Providence. He still thought he should never marry, though there were times when the solace of a kindred mind, when the social confidence of wedded love, he imagined, might give a more decided interest to all his pursuits, cheer his lonely meal, and even extend the circle of benevolence; yet, Matilda's image could not be displaced by any being he had hitherto associated with, and her child and his future good was the subject of many an air-built reverie and plan. It was delightful to witness the young lord's attention to his little companions; nor was there a more pleasing

trait in his early conduct, than an undeviating regard to truth, and a total absence of all selfish feelings. Both he and the young Elizabeth seemed to consider Ellinor as their interesting protégé, they being two years her senior; it was sometimes amusing to hear them, even in the lisping accents of their own childhood, term Ellinor the baby, and excuse any little fault because she did not know better.

These children, under such watchful guidance, were taught, even in their tender years, that religion was the 'one thing needful,' to correct the passions and to amend the heart; and the expansion of the germ of intellect, bid fair to reward each anxious relative and friend, with their future attainment of good, and every mental improvement.

As time past rapidly on, though in Miss Brudenel's calculation, most tardy of late had appeared its progress, the letter arrived from her friend, announcing his expected arrival.

Never could the intelligence have been more welcome to convert her solicitude into joy, and to soothe a mind so continually agitated by the intemperate zeal of her sister.

Mr. Donavan had, without any apparent success, endeavoured to convince Maria of her

errors, but he kindly assured Miss Brudenel, he did not give up the cause as hopeless, having met with instances where time and patience, kindness and moderation, had in the end proved successful.

In a more than usually protracted absence from home, Mr. Donavan received the following letter from Willoughby:

"With what different emotions do I now write to you, my ever valued friend, than when pleasure led me astray, or when idleness procrastinated that frequent intercourse with friends, which should have been my pride and pleasure to have held sacred.

"Do not, however, mistake me so far, as to imagine I am buoyed up with my present self-righteousness; many and various are my spiritual struggles to obtain a due command over myself, from relapsing into apathy, or being led to defer the important avocations with which I am surrounded; but I trust you will give credit to my sincerity, when I acknowledge, that I now hold in abhorrence the disgraceful and ruinous pursuits which once engrossed my time, and obscured every little pretension to talent I am blest with; and also believe the satisfaction I expe-

rience, when I feel that I have endeavoured honourably to discharge the duties of my profession. Surely, Donavan, it is no self-presumption to contrast with these employments,—the midnight revel, and those unhallowed pursuits, which have so often palled on repetition, and seared the conscience beyond the power of awakening it, to a just sense of its dangerous insensibility. I am every day more and more convinced, that our follies, nay, our vices, often originate in idleness; employment is the grand antidote, not only against these serious evils, but against those various and visionary ills which disturb the peace of half mankind; not knowing what it is to pass a vacant hour, I have neither time nor inclination to indulge the vagaries of fancy, nor endanger my health by intemperance. 'The feast of reason, and the flow of soul,' I scruple not to affirm, can still charm my senses, and decidedly prove my growing rationality; and among my respectable and numerous clients, I have formed some connections, in every sense of the word, advantageous.

To you, my best and early friend, I scruple not to affirm, that I am obliged to be thoughtful and circumspect, even in the duties of my profession; cautious in the choice of recrea-

tions, lest I should again accumulate just causes for repentance, and having fixed on one principal object of pursuit, to render it ever subservient to higher considerations.

"With humble confidence, I trust, all this will not prove an unprofitable theory. Those who have experienced such warnings and escapes as I have, will not deride the change of opinions, sentiments, and conduct, to which they have given rise; and those who know not what it is to think, will never give themselves the trouble to fathom their importance.

"I was interrupted, a day or two ago, in my serious, but, I trust, not sad reflections, by a call from a gentleman who has lately become my client. The business in question engrossed much time and consideration, and with much urbanity and politeness he pressed me to partake of his family dinner, that we might look over some papers together, necessary to the elucidation of the affair in which he was interested.

"I had promised to accept his invitation; but glancing my eye over the card of his address, I perceived he resided in the very house in Hanover-square which I had so disgracefully left. My first impulse was to send an

excuse; but various considerations induced me to retract the intention, and I resolutely kept my engagement. Were I to confess that the knocker trembled in my hand; that I was agitated to observe the well-known furniture, and even some ornamental arrangements of poor Ellinor's; and that when I was shewn into the room from which I had finally parted with her, I was compelled to avow a slight indisposition to account for my nervous feelings; you, I trust, will not be unmercifully severe—and though I too truly merit such mortification, give me some little credit for going through the day with tolerable composure. The gentleman's lovely wife presided at the well-ordered table; and a child, about the age of my little Ellinor, when I was the master of the mansion, made her appearance for a few minutes as soon as the cloth was removed. I felt comparatively composed when left alone with my client; and after a tedious examination of the papers, &c. I meditated an immediate escape from the house. His polite and friendly entreaties to join the ladies in the drawing-room might have been evaded; but he had one more paper of consequence to consult me about, if I would favour him hy walking up to his study for a few

minutes; and nothing short of absolute rudeness could have farther saved my too sensitive feelings. An idea passed through my mind, that had I still been the master of the mansion, I should probably have remained the creature of habit, the slave of prejudice, and the mere worldling of a society I internally despised. My mental reservations were soon disturbed by our entrance into the drawing-room: the wife of my client was seated at the piano—at the very piano from which Ellinor had drawn its sweetest sounds—two elegant young women were leaning over her, apparently intimate guests. She would have arisen from the instrument; but Mr. B. affectionately replaced her, saying, 'I am persuaded Mr. Coventry has music in his soul. I beg, Harriet, you will finish the piece you were playing.' And placing one of the young ladies at the harp, playfully commanded her to accompany her friend.

"Donavan, the silence I was compelled to maintain was favourable to recollection; but you well know there was indeed once 'music in my soul,' and I could only mechanically bow my thanks and admiration when the sound of harmony ceased to vibrate on my ear.

" You may recollect we heard the house and whole furniture had been sold together; and I could perceive that the very musical compositions had remained undisturbed; and when the ladies were selecting some favourite airs which poor Ellinor so excelled in singing, I had the good sense and resolution to plead an engagement which would indispensably compel me to take my leave.

" I feel to-day almost ashamed of the emotions of yesterday; but so it is—we often evince more fortitude when tried by serious evils, than by the unexpected or incidental occurrences of the day.

" Passing through Lincoln's-inn-fields this morning, I met the worthy Mr. Harcourt: we adjourned to a coffee-house, and I scrupled not to avow to him the whole state of my affairs and present prospects. He heard me almost in parental solicitude, and with the refinement of delicacy and the warmth of friendship, counselled me in the kindest manner. He spoke of poor Ellinor, and attributed her errors in a great measure to a mistaken education. He also spoke in a sort of doubtful manner of Mr. Onslow—that he could not flatter me by saying

his ill-will had positively subsided, unjustly attributing Ellinor's miseries to have originated in my treatment: he was still lamenting that his fortune and estates must descend to a female, still avowing, that had Ellinor been a boy, he never could have parted from him. 'But,' continued Mr. Harcourt, 'it is most fortunate for your child that she is not fated to be spoiled by undue indulgence, and, whatever new events may happen, that she will be guarded from presumption or despair.' Seeing I looked surprised, he said, 'Concealment of expected events is not always wise; I am sorry to add, we have great fears that Mr. Onslow will ultimately form a most unpromising connection by marrying the niece of his artful housekeeper: she is so tutored by her aunt, that she keeps up her own terms; and by such cajolement as female seduction can practise, this sententious, this grave and revered signor, is going to make a fool of himself in his old age, and probably dispossess his rightful heiress of her inheritance.'

"It was not in nature, Donavan, to be unmoved at this statement; and Mr. Harcourt said all that could be said on the subject. At length I exclaimed, 'My child shall never feel her pecuniary losses.'

" ' True,' replied Mr. Harcourt, smiling; ' yet we cannot lose what we have never possessed; but I understand your meaning. Mr. Onslow's conduct will doubly stimulate your praiseworthy exertions and newly-awakened talents. I am a man of few words, Mr. Coventry; but I loved the mother of your wife—I was godfather to her child, and the young Ellinor shall never want a friend—we will mutually protect her.'

" There appeared to be more meaning in Mr. Harcourt's words than what ' met the ear.' Motives of delicacy prevented my dwelling on the subject; but I am persuaded he could estimate my feelings; and after appointing to take bachelor's fare at my chambers, we parted, and, I trust, mutually satisfied with one another.

" After dinner, Mr. Harcourt renewed all interesting subjects; on which I will now make neither comment nor observation, trusting that I shall soon leave to my partner the arrangement of parchment business, breathe the sweet atmosphere of heaven, and enjoy the society of the dearest little circle on earth. Tell our noble Charles I have not forgotten his rocking-horse. Of course, you will read all that you

think interesting to my mother. With due faithfulness I am truly

"Your obliged friend,

"W. COVENTRY."

"Since writing the above, I hear the ship is arrived in which Miss Brudenel has been expecting her friend!"

CHAPTER XIV.

When Mr. Donavan communicated the contents of the above letter to Mrs. Coventry and Elizabeth, how joyful were the glad tidings it contained! To think that their beloved Willoughby was not only acknowledging his late erroneous opinions, but endeavouring to act with consistency and decision; and, that he now considered home as the circle of enjoyment; that his talents were no longer obscured by perishable worldly temptations, excited the warmest feelings of maternal affection: and they attempted to give Mr. Donavan the praise, next to Heaven, for his judicious counsel, his patience, and long forbearance, during the various trials of Willoughby's conduct.

"To God alone, my dear Madam, be all praise given for every mercy; nor can we fail to remark how wise, but various, are the means by which he brings the erring to repentance, the afflicted to peace, and the infidel to 'a right understanding of all good things.' Surely our ignorance might furnish us with an answer to all

ignorant inquiries—why apparent evils are permitted, why disappointment and afflictions are awarded, why our best formed plans are frustrated?—from the conviction that we now see only in part, and that the stupendous and awful whole, both in a moral and spiritual sense, is hidden from human perception. How infinite was the mercy that prevented our dear Willoughby from realizing his desperate scheme! Had he reached a distant land, without friends, reputation, or fortune, to what lengths might despair have led him! And though I am well aware that the determined caviller will still frivolously ask, with other presumptuous questions, why his reformation could not have been even there accomplished?—I can only repeat, all is ordered for the best; and we display our ignorance when we do not bow to the decrees of a wise and superintending power."

These ideas led to an interesting conversation; and Mrs. Coventry received much comfort from Mr. Donavan giving it as his decided opinion, that there appeared to be the fairest chance of Willoughby becoming all she wished, from the doubts he now entertained of his own stability of character, and, above all, from his repentance not being the result of the delusion

of deistical principles, but founded on a conviction of those sacred truths which have never yet deceived the humble and inquiring mind. "It is true, my dear Madam," he continued, "these are early days to pronounce, with even all our well-founded hopes, that Willoughby's reformation is perfectly secure. Casual temptations may assail him; but I will venture to affirm he will regain his self-possession, and never deliberately court those spiritual and moral dangers with which he is surrounded."

Mr. Donavan's assertions were indeed well founded: Willoughby never again relapsed into his former errors and vices; and though far from having become a faultless being, resolution, the result of Christian principles, induced him ever to shun those associates and habits which had been the wreck of his former well-doing and peace. He felt his own responsibility to the God who made him, and had so mercifully preserved his life in the hour of folly and of danger. Whatever doubts he had formerly been led to encourage of the soul's immortality, were now no more; and, convinced as he was of another state of existence, he sometimes confessed to his excellent friend, Mr. Donavan, that the fear of forfeiting the hope of

future happiness was the stimulating principle of all his actions.

Domestic events had marked the lapse of time; and, as is generally the case in this chequered scene, to some they were the harbingers of joy, to others the messengers of woe. Captain Melford arrived in health and safety; and halcyon days of love and peace had been truly enjoyed by the sincerely attached parties. Unforeseen circumstances had arisen which compelled him to return to India: he had passed his time of absence with great happiness and rationality in the society of his beloved Mary and her justly-esteemed friends. The Vincents and Willoughby, and Mrs. Coventry, parted from him with great interest, and truly lamented the obstacles which prevented his immediate union with Miss Brudenel; and after various discussions and unrealized plans, the dreaded departure had taken place.

Mrs. Vincent, with usual kindness, insisted on her friend taking up her abode at Beech Park for some time to come; but months elapsed before Mary could regain her spirits, or fail to anticipate the dangers of the sea, and the uncertain safety of the military profession. The elastic spirits of youth, united with a firm

dependence on the protection of Heaven, at length contributed to reassure her drooping mind, and the daily expectation as time passed on of receiving satisfactory letters from the Cape, encouraged her endeavours to take interest in every usual avocation. Sir James Osborn, who was really a good natured man, ceased to annoy her, and in his rough and unceremonious manner, often attempted to modulate his speech to some term of consolation. Captain Melford had so perfectly understood his character, that though they could never have been companions, the sense of the one, and the good humour of the other, were productive of not only harmonious, but sometimes entertaining association.

The hints which Mr. Harcourt had given to Willoughby in regard to his infatuated friend, were too justly founded. Mr. Onslow, the sapient despiser of women, and the severe condemner of the follies of others, had been many months married to an uneducated girl of seventeen, and in due time the birth of a son and heir, consoled him for some increasing domestic inquietudes, and, consequently deprived Willoughby's child of her late lawful inheritance.

The children were improving in all that their youthful years could attain. Little Ellinor was

still the protégé of Lord Charles, and though he thought the young Elizabeth never could be wrong, he generally appeared better to enjoy the playful hour, when the sportive Ellinor joined the party, puzzling him by questions, or taxing his strength and patience by the playful command of some juvenile feat or exploit.

Willoughby exulted in the happy ignorance of his darling child, and though the loss of such an immense fortune was certainly a great trial, no future anticipations embittered the present hour; experimently assured, that there were possessions of more intrinsic value, than large estates and worldly riches.

Mrs. Vincent had been the happy mother for a few short months of two lovely boys, alike in form and feature, the interesting twins gave every promise of a continuance of health and strength; but alas! without any apparent cause, they drooped and died, and it was long before she could contemplate the little beings, as angels of light, which had so contributed to render this world an increasing state of felicity. The loss which nature suffers in the death of a child, is like giving up a part of self, and a bereavement of those interesting and tender cares, which the helpless months of infancy are pecu-

liarly calculated to excite. Elizabeth wept as a mother, but soon felt as a Christian, and she perceived it became a despotic duty to endeavour to arouse her husband by her own conduct, to unconditional submission to the will of Heaven. The sudden and almost unexpected loss of his boys, from a variety of circumstances, nearly overpowered Mr. Vincent's firmness, nor is it often, that a father laments so keenly the death of children in the first stages of infancy, either from constitutional firmness, or from a want of that sensitive interest which so peculiarly accompanies the solicitude of a mother. A severe fit of illness from which Mrs. Coventry had happily recovered, whilst it excited all Elizabeth's anxiety, turned in some degree the current of her feelings, and in the gratitude she felt for the recovery of Mrs Coventry, her regrets for the loss of her infants, had a little subsided. Willoughby evinced all the affection of a son; and health, and peace, and joy, began once more to visit the late mourning relatives and friends.

When the time had past which should have brought the anxiously expected tidings of Captain Melford's arrival in India, Miss Brudenel very naturally felt all the inquietude of suspense, and

too soon, doubts, of the safety of the ship were evidently increasing in Mr. Vincent's and Elizabeth's mind. Harassed as Miss Brudenel continually felt by the inconsistency of her sister,—her permanent abode was still at Beech Park; but one Sunday making her usual visit at home, and meeting with a newspaper in her father's room, she was earnestly looking over the ship news, when her sister abruptly entered, and began a violent condemnation of the immorality of reading newspapers on a Sunday; that she could little have attended to what she pretended to join in, when in the house of God, "if such an immediate transition from spiritual to worldly affairs could engage her mind; that the idol of her earthly love seemed to take up her whole thoughts, and, that if it were ordained he should be cast away, no human inquietude could alter his fate."

Miss Brudenel interrupted her saying,—"Maria, forbear, in mercy forbear, though I cannot think as you do, my trust is in Heaven. The fate of an affianced husband is indeed the source of my present heartfelt anxiety, yet I humbly trust, I am not very guilty, in embracing every means to ascertain the safety of, not a

criminally worshipped idol, but of a man on whom my hopes of earthly happiness depend."

The delusions of a fanaticism on the weak and credulous, seldom fail of producing inconsistency of conduct, and direful condemnation of all that differ from their enthusiastic opinions. Hence it was, that Maria from a present hidden cause, sometimes wished to relax the discipline she had imposed on herself, and sometimes imagined she could only do God service, by the conversion of others to those doctrines by which she herself had been so enlightened. The fortunate event of some itinerant preachers having for a short time left the village, again obliged her to attend the parish church, and if she did not rapturously praise the preacher, she could not, with any regard to truth, arraign Mr. Donavan for not enforcing the Gospel, but contented herself with lamenting the conciseness of a written discourse, and the repetitions of a form of prayer.

Very serious apprehensions were entertained for the safety of the vessel in which Captain Melford had embarked, and it soon became impossible from the length of time which had past without any letter or tidings, to conceal from

Miss Brudenel the dreaded certainty. The India House, and all that had any interest in the ship, gave her up for lost, without being able precisely to determine, when, and where, the awful event took place.

Mr. Vincent had received a most anxious letter from that friend in the country, who had been so generously assisted by him on pecuniary matters some few years past.

This gentleman's son had accompanied Captain Melford to India, with every fair prospect before him for future military promotion, and the wretched father only wrote with a vague hope of hearing something consolatory.

A fatal confirmation of the wreck of Miss Brudenel's happy prospects called forth all Mrs. Vincent's kind and friendly attentions. She did did not tell her, as her sister would have done, that it was a judgment from Heaven, for setting her affections on things below; she did not continually affirm, that her poor lost friend had a soul to be saved, and perhaps was taken off in the midst of his sins, but waving all commonplace consolations, she first listened in kindness and patience to every natural and sometimes despairing regret, and after mingling the tear of sympathy, drew from the rich stores of the

Gospel, all that could meliorate affliction and soothe the oppressed and disappointed mind to peace.

Willoughby was deeply affected; he almost felt as if he himself had escaped a similar fate, nor could the tenderest attached brother have shewn a more delicate sympathy for a beloved sister, than he evinced towards Miss Brudenel, by his soothing conduct and manners.

"Oh! had I been his wife" (Miss Brudenel sometimes almost unconsciously ejaculated), and many months were past, before a gleam of cheerfulness could even excite one pensive smile.

At length time, and the resignation which religious feelings can alone encourage, aided by the unceasing attentions of Mrs. Vincent, so far restored Miss Brudenel as to make her feel interested in the children's society; to delight in their growing improvements, and to strive against the ingratitude, of not appearing duly to estimate Mrs. Vincent's exertions, who had herself of late suffered from various anxieties.

Sir James Osborn, as a near neighbour, continued his unceremonious visits at Beech Park; and though he knew not how to behave to the afflicted, he often roughly expressed his commiserating sentiments, and it had been more

than once observed, his enquiries were ever repeated in any chance meeting with Miss Brudenel's sister with more than common interest. He had sense enough to know that all hope was extinguished in regard to renewing his offers to Miss Brudenel; savage as he was in some respects, her grief appeared sacred in his eyes, and he began to think Maria Brudenel quite as handsome as her sister. He had certainly heard some vague reports in regard to her methodistical habits; but having seen her as was before mentioned at the parish church, and from various conversations with Mr. Donavan, himself induced to go thither of a sunday morning (when his horses or dogs did not require his advice or attention,) he had time to contemplate Maria's blooming countenance, and determined to know from herself if she could be as inexorable as her sister. A chance meeting, gave rise to a very curious dialogue; the young lady entertained hopes of making a convert of her hearer, and the gentleman settled it that she was very handsome, and would be so engaged in her schools and avocations, that if they were married, he should enjoy full liberty to pursue his out-door sports and usual haunts.

Maria's religion had not quite conquered the

weakness of female vanity; she had long been quick sighted in regard to his looks of admiration, and hence it was that some ornamental parts of dress had been resumed, and that she was variable and inconsistent in her conduct.

She had thought she was dead to the vanities of the world, but who can say till they are tried that they will be more than conquerors? To be married before her sister; to be loved by so handsome a man; to have a fortune, carriage, house, and servants at her own command; were temptations that all the "striving of the spirit" could not prevail against, and temporizing with her conscience, that she should save a soul alive by converting her husband to righteousness; she deemed it prudent to conceal the extent of her intemperate zeal, and to encourage the baronet's hopes.

The offer was made, and the reference to her father permitted, in an equally concise and extraordinary manner; and to the surprise of all, the day was fixed for Miss Brudenel's sister to become Lady Osborn.

What a revolution does an hour often make in the feelings of dependent and short sighted mortals. Miss Brudenel had struggled with the intensity of suffering, and was endeavour-

ing to think that the great change Maria must necessarily experience, would render her more consistent in practice, and more rational in her opinions. Sir James Osborn was not exactly the man she would have chosen for her sister; but as she could not alter, what she did not approve, she hoped the best, and would not anticipate evil.

CHAPTER XV.

One morning as Miss Brudenel was conversing on the subject with Mrs. Vincent;—what language can paint her surprise, her hopes, or her expectations, when amongst some letters the servant brought in, she beheld the hand-writing of her dearly regretted friend. Mrs. Vincent did not immediatety perceive her agitation, having herself just opened a letter from Willoughby, wherein he stated, that the news of the Captain's arrival at Portsmouth in a vessel from the Cape, had just reached the India House; that his own ship and cargo were completely wrecked, —the passengers and most of the crew saved, having been cast on an uninhabited island.

But leaving the two friends in the delirium of expectation, and omitting an accurate description of the agitated feelings of the one, and the kind, but resolute assurances of the other, when the whole tenour of Willoughby's letter confirmed the unlooked for happiness;—when the precious memorial in Miss Brudenel's hand,

corroborated Willoughby's tidings, the perusal of Captain Melford's letter, may best elucidate the mystery of his long and fearful silence.

"TO MISS BRUDENEL*.

"Blessed be the moment, my dearest Mary, that I can once more write to you,—yet when I consider what time must yet elapse, before your anxious mind can be satisfied that I am really in existence, my natural impatience is heightened almost beyond the power of endurance. But ere I attempt to narrate our eventful escape, let me assure you, I am indeed safe and well, and endeavour to express my heartfelt joy that you were not the companion of our hardships. Had not existing circumstances forbidden the temptation of fondly insisting that you should accompany me, you might have

* The leading facts of the following narrative were furnished by the Captain of the E. I. Company's ship Blendon Hall, which was wrecked on the island "Inaccessible," in July 1821. The extraordinary circumstances attending the escape of the crew, may therefore apologize for the lengthened details which are copied from the Captain's "Log."

fallen a sacrifice to all the privations to which human nature can be subjected.

"When shall I commence my narrative, if I give way to the various feelings of my yet agitated mind! if I figure to myself the sufferings of your dear heart, for my death, or shipwreck. I will resolutely begin from the 7th of May, on which day, we sailed from Gravesend. Nothing very particular had occurred, but the casual anxieties with which a voyage is generally accompanied. Your dear image was all I could see, or feel interested in, and I seemed only mechanically to join the society into which chance had thrown me. After we lost sight of the Lizard, we experienced a severe gale of wind which lasted twenty-four hours. We had then a favourable wind, and nothing happened worth mentioning, till we got into the 36th south latitude, when we wished to make for the islands of Trinstan de Cunha, in order to correct the reckoning; and we steered directly for them, expecting our near approach by nine o'clock. It was fine clear weather at eight A. M., but in about an hour it became very foggy, and a good look out, was ordered for sea weed, which is known to be an indication of nearing the islands; about ten, every body being on

deck, sea weed was discovered, and a man was immediately sent aloft, to take in a sail, who instantly cried out, "Breakers a-head." I then heard the Captain order up the main sail, which of course gave rise to an uncommon bustle on the deck; and I only then imagined there was a severe squall coming on, but I soon learned the dreadful news, that land and breakers were right a-head. The jolly boat and cutter were immediately lowered, and every exertion used to make the tack; the swell being so high, we could not bring the ship round. The wind soon subsided, and the sea driving her close to the breakers, the stream anchor was let go, but the depth of water did not allow any hold to prevent her drifting on the breakers. Till she struck, the boats continued to make every exertion to bring her round, they then cut, and lost sight of the ship. We had no view of land, although we could not be more than the length of half a cable's distance from it.—The fog blowing a little off, we found ourselves at the foot of an immense mountain, which until then, had been enveloped in a cloud, and was so thick, that at the time the ship struck, when the boats cut their tow ropes, they entirely lost sight of her, and of course were unable to render

us any assistance. They however got on shore, about four hundred yards northward of the ship; every exertion was then used to get out the long boat, but she rapidly filled, and yielding off towards the sea, soon went to pieces, leaving us totally destitute of the means of saving the lives of the crew and passengers. Orders were then given to cut away the masts, after which, by great trouble and ingenuity, a raft was formed, but it would not carry more than seven, and after much time and difficulty six men were safely landed; for I am grieved to add, one poor fellow perished, being washed off when the raft struck against a rock. Several seamen now attempted to swim on shore with a rope, but could not succeed; the sea continuing to run more tremendously high, threatened instant destruction, and every one that could, swim, now in desperation, attempted to escape, and all but one succeeded. At this moment eternity seemed opening to our view, and the husband, the father, the wife, and the friend, were clinging despairingly, either to the unconscious children, or to their equally horror-struck companions.

"There was not a moment to be lost, and recollecting your dear picture was in a drawer in

my cabin, I instantly ventured to the spot, tied it round my neck, and obliged to disencumber myself of clothes, plunged into the sea, and reached the shore in safety! And now, conceive if you can, our exertions; that is, mine and the men who had previously landed, to assist the unfortunate sufferers on the wreck. I should have mentioned that soon after, the ship broke in the middle, the forepart being nearest the shore; the rest of the crew and passengers clinging to it on the larboard side of the forecastle and forechains, remained some time in that perilous situation. The sea continued to run so high, that the forecastle went in half, and the larboard side drove on shore, which being supported by part of the beams of the upper deck, prevented the back-water surf from carrying it out again, and taking part of the larboard side with it as far as the gangway; which part drove near enough to the shore, to allow a rope to be flung to us who were on land. And thus we were enabled to rescue from a watery grave the remaining part of the crew and passengers; but whilst memory lasts, the smothered cry of despair, the supplicating gesture, the horror, distress, and confusion of the moment, can never be forgotten.

"When all were providentially landed, the scene that followed baffles all description. My dearest Mary, I myself have experienced escapes from many a hair breadth danger, my head has often been covered in the day of battle, and I have ever given praise where praise alone was due, to a high and protecting power; but such a memorable instance as this, has seldom been recorded. Our unexpected preservation aroused the energies of every mind; and surprised, but not stupified, by the magnitude of the mercy, with uplifted hands, and bended knees, as if with one feeling of devotion, all joined in grateful praise to heaven, the instant the safety of all was ascertained. To complete the awful scene, the stormy wind and tempest, thunder and lightning, more loud and vivid than you can form any idea of, accompanied with a drenching rain, seemed awfully to pronounce, 'Be still, and know that I am God;' at the very instant that the wreck of the ship sunk, to rise no more!

"When the grateful enthusiasm of feeling had a little subsided, we endeavoured to find some place of shelter for the night, but the rock above the beach was our only place of refuge. And the scene which then presented itself, is

far above my power to describe; but throwing ourselves on the ground, we lay anxiously waiting for the light of the morning. A mother, clasping her desolate children—and other females—suffering from exhaustion and fatigue, drenched by the rain, with scarcely an article of clothing, without water, or a morsel of provision—would have excited the compassion of the hardest heart. That you, my dearest Mary, were not one of the wretched sufferers, was still my best consolation; for cold, fatigue, hunger, and want of apparel, were not all the trials female delicacy had to encounter.

"It was some time before the fear of beasts of prey could be conquered; for we had fancied we heard their dreaded roaring at some distance, and the hideous noises of unknown birds, whose wild notes were entirely strange to us.

"As soon as day appeared, July 24, I accompanied some gentlemen in the search of a more desirable situation; but, alas! we only discovered the remains of the wreck, as far as the eye could see. Having tasted nothing the day before, my companions caught a small bird or two, not unlike a thrush, and literally devoured them on the spot. On our return, we took a more minute examination of the things

that had been cast on shore nearest the place we were at—a few bottles of cider were not the least of our prizes. We then were much dismayed to behold, very near us, an immense animal, nearly twenty feet in length, with a large trunk, called by the sailors a sea elephant; but upon finding it destitute of feet, we attacked him with large stones, which induced the creature to gain the water as quickly as possible: but soon after we found several others, of smaller size, without trunks—sea lions, and some small seals.

" Upon returning to our companions in distress, we found them somewhat equipped in red cloth, which had been washed on shore; and after clothing ourselves in the same manner, we endeavoured to find out some place of shelter for the night, where we might erect tents with the cloth. The best we could descry was a miserable situation, ancle deep in mud; and we found but little comfort in our new abode. The red cloth was barely sufficient to cover the roof of our tents; and the rain coming down in torrents, they soon fell to the ground, leaving us as destitute as before. I should have mentioned some casks had been thrown on shore, the contents of which had inebriated many of the sailors;

and these casks now, with a little contrivance, afforded many of us a shelter for the next miserable night. All this day, raw birds had been our only nourishment.

"Wednesday, July 25.—In the afternoon the weather began to clear up. A few tents had been more successfully erected, and one large enough to shelter the ladies and children, and some of the passengers.

"Thursday, July 26.—It rained heavily the first part of this day; but the weather again clearing up, we had the good fortune, from a rocket being thrown on shore, after a great deal of trouble, to make a fire with part of the wreck. I have shuddered to tell you of the necessity of devouring raw birds—nor can I now dwell on the hunger and voracity of many who scarcely waited for the extinction of life in the unfortunate penguins, before they were flung on the fire to satisfy the famishing crew.

"The ship's buoy having been also cast on shore, was sawed in half with a surgical instrument, (a box-full having luckily escaped from the wreck,) and now enabled us to use as a culinary vessel, to boil our wretched penguin soup in.

"Friday, July 27.—This day being free from

rain, three parties were formed to forage for provisions on the beach, to seek for wood, and to take a more accurate survey of the island.

" Saturday, July 28.—They had a good view of the islands, Trinstan de Cunha and Nightingale. They supposed this island to be about nine miles in circumference, and 3000 feet high. They found a quantity of wild celery, and made their report of their day's fatigue.

" Sunday, July 29.—We suffered much inconvenience for the want of shoes—the beach was very rough and bad walking, and the mountain never dry. The first sea elephant was killed this day. We had divine service in Scotch and English forms. Books and writing-paper were washed on shore.

" Monday, July 30.—When our cutter was left by our crew to the mercy of the waves, it washed up on the rock with very little damage: it was now our only hope, trusting that Providence would send a ship in sight, and that we might be able to make our situation known.

" Thursday, August 2.—Employed on the beach as usual. More red cloth washed on shore, and a quantity of shirts, but all very much torn. We continued to live on two sea elephants daily, and to boil their livers and

tongues, which then appeared to us good feeding.

" Friday, Aug. 3.—All hands employed as usual on the beach. Our provisions decreasing fast, having little left but the penguins, which are very coarse eating, and did not appear to be wholesome food—these, and the seals, being now our principal support.

" Sunday, Aug. 5.—Brought up as usual our two loads of wood; but permitted not the sacred day to pass without divine worship, in the usual Scotch and English forms. Surely we had been worse than heathens, had Sunday passed unnoticed!

" Wednesday, Aug. 15.—Last night we had a heavy storm; and the sea came so high on the beach, that our cutter was dashed to atoms! All hope was now extinguished of ever reaching Trinstan de Cunha, or being liberated from our monotonous and suffering situation. I will not here pause to describe my own feelings: your dear image was at once my distress and consolation. If the tools had been washed on shore, it is probable the carpenter might have constructed a boat from the wreck.

" Thursday, Aug. 16.—Clearer weather to-

wards the evening. A number of seals killed this day—their flavour not unlike mutton.

"Friday, Aug. 17.—Finer weather. Penguin's eggs found in greater abundance, having before met with but few. A pudding was made, consisting of the liver, heart, and tongue of the seal, cut up, and boiled with some celery roots. What would our gourmands say to the dish? More seals killed.

"Saturday, Aug. 18.—Fine weather. Our store of wine and spirits from the wreck fast decreasing. Some will feel the want of them, but others will find the benefit, as a part of the crew have scarcely seen day-light since the wreck. It is hardly credible, that human beings should so soon forget the mercies they have received from an omnipotent hand!

"Sunday, Aug. 19.—We all continue in good health, but very weak. The children have never had a day's complaint; pleased with every novelty, their happy age knows not the meaning of anticipating evil. Divine service as usual.

"Tuesday, Aug. 21.—We discovered a new sort of bird, not unlike a pigeon; attracted by the fire, we made a large one, and with sticks killed many of them. The day before, we had

written a memorial of our situation, hoisted a fly-staff on the N. W. point, and secured the paper in a bottle; and this day was obliged to replace the flag-staff, that was thrown down in the night.

" Wednesday, Aug. 22.—About 800 penguin's eggs were this evening discovered, and proved a very unexpected blessing, but we had reason to fear excess in eating them might be productive of disease.

" Wednesday, Aug. 29.—All the seamen deserted the passengers, and left them to work for themselves; many of us suffering from the dampness of the atmosphere.

" Thursday, Aug. 30.—Rainy weather. The continued diet of eggs, not productive of sickness or disease. The quarrels of the sailors subsided.

" Friday, Aug. 31.—The inclemency of the weather not decreased; a seaman has begun to construct a canoe, the frame made from the hoops of casks, and it is to be covered with seal-skins: we live in the hope of its replacing our lost cutter. The elephants continue to come on shore in great numbers. These animals, and penguins, are all we have to subsist on; but we cannot hope the latter will remain

long with us, as they appear nearly to have done depositing their eggs. Three seamen brought to their tents this day, at three different loads, one hundred dozen of eggs from the N. W. point, which is not much frequented. We are anxiously waiting for a fine day, to cut skins for the canoe: the men are most sanguine, from their exertions.

" Sunday, September 2.—Heavy showers,—a division among the people, prayers only read in private.

" Tuesday, Sept. 4.—Weather rather milder; two or three men making a flat-bottomed boat—a punt, in order to venture to Trinstan de Cunha.

" Saturday, Sept. 8.—A very fine day; nothing particular done; the punt nearly finished.

" Tuesday, Sept. 11.—Found a new species of birds, which were better eating than the penguins.

" Thursday, Sept. 13.—Bad weather; some thousands of birds came on the island, to take shelter in the holes under ground, which accounts for the island appearing so much undermined.

" Friday, Sept. 14.—Moderate weather; more seals were taken, which are generally better relished than most of our *delicacies*. Oh, Mary! what a luxurious feast, should I think, one of our

dear family dinners, at the cottage, the parsonage, or Beech Park. Shall I ever see thy much-loved face again? I dare not trust myself to think. The penguins are departing fast; seals are not very plentiful,—but we will not anticipate evil.

"Sunday, Sept. 16.—Fine weather. You will not smile, when I avow, I read prayers in our own tents to eight of the passengers. You will allow, dear girl, I am no preacher; but I cannot help repeating, it is strange, that men should so soon forget, 'to praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men.'

"Monday, Sept. 17.—Fine weather. No eggs found that can tempt one to eat them; enough have been preserved to allow us a few a day, for about six weeks. All ready for the canoe.

"Tuesday, Sept. 18.—The weather fine, but rather cold. The punt ready for launching. I am afraid the canoe will not be ready for a long time, as the skins are very difficult to dry properly.

"Wednesday, Sept. 19.—Fine weather. Many of the men building punts; none seriously ill.

"Tuesday, Sept. 25.—The weather more set-

tled. Our friends, the penguins, nearly all gone, The canoe finishing very successfully.

" Saturday, Sept. 29.—Cold, but fine. Boats getting on slowly; but, at length, one of the punts was launched; she received from us three welcome cheers: she may do very well, but sails indifferently. Another punt just finished.

" Wednesday, October 4.—Launched both the punts, and fish caught in abundance.

" I cannot allow myself not to think, but that this monotonous diary, will be interesting to my beloved Mary: you know my heart, but I had not the power nor resolution to dictate all its varied feelings, as the sun arose and set, without a prospect of liberation. Could I have dwelt on all the contrivances, which ingenious necessity introduced;—and were you to meet with the whole account of our wonderful escape from a watery grave, and our subsequent preservation from disease and famine, you would probably throw the book aside, as a mere invention of human fancy, and only calculated to impose on the weak and credulous. You could not believe, that after a night passed on the wet ground, without the shelter of a single tree to keep off an inundation of rain; that not the slightest complaint, nor even a cold, attacked either the deli-

cate female, the sucking child, or the veteran sailor. One of the ladies had received a deep wound on her ancle, from coming in contact with a piece of broken copper, and so serious the accident appeared, that without any salutary relief at hand, much apprehension was entertained that she would be a long and helpless sufferer, but the simple application of sea-water to the part, in a few days, perfected the unexpected cure. Mary, I declare it to be my firm opinion, that a protecting God could alone have saved us from the varied dangers we have encountered, both by sea and land. Can I ever erase from my remembrance, the awful moment, when the ship would not answer the helm, when a heavy swell, and the current combined, to drive us quickly on towards the shore,—the breakers presenting the most tremendous appearance, foaming and rolling along like thunder, and throwing up showers of spray, as they struck the rocky bank, to which we were fatally hastening.

" But I must now check remembrance, and continue my rough memorandums, which, by the bye, were all noted down, in the blood of our friendly penguins.

" I left off on the 8th of October; in a few

days the carpenters' boat was completed, and on the 19th, eight of the crew ventured on their perilous attempt to reach Trinstan de Cunha. Alas! I am grieved to say they were never heard of again.

"Recovered a little from the blank which pervaded all parties from the apparent termination of our lately raised hopes of relief. On the 8th of November a second similar attempt was made, and ten of the remaining crew ventured again on the same perilous voyage, and succeeded; being all safely landed on the island of Trinstan de Cunha. They found it to be inhabited by ten settlers, and to write, as briefly as possible, in due time, they were prevailed on to transport us over, from the assistance of whale boats, which blessing, I think occurred, by the 9th of January following.

"Though the island Inaccessible is within sight of Trinstan de Cunha, and every signal had been made by means of fire, smoke, and flags, all had proved ineffectual to make known our distressful situation. I believe I have mentioned that the island 'Inaccessible' is about nine miles round, well wooded, and so remarkably high, that it is generally a day's journey to attain the summit. It is, we well know, constantly enve-

loped in clouds, and visited with squalls, has no harbour nor cove, and can only be landed on to leeward. And now, Mary, you must imagine, for words cannot express the various emotions of every beating heart, when the whale boats really approached our coasts, when our deliverance was certified, and the tumult of expectation was increased by the necessary arrangements of the hour of departure. To draw lots for those who were first to freight the boats, was judged to be the most equitable proceeding. I will not be disinterested enough to affirm, I wished to be of the last cargo, but so it was. I saw our companions depart, and awaited in all the inquietude of suspense for the assurance of their safety by the return of the whale boats. They did return, and nearly as soon as we expected, for of course I had companions to share my fate. We were the last to leave the island, having left a memorial to mark the miracle of our preservation, and which we thought might soften the horrors of despair of other unfortunates in a similar situation. We embarked on our short but interesting voyage, 'Inaccessible' receding from our view, and new hopes and renovated spirits pervading every bosom. 'Mary we shall meet again,' was my mental reserva-

tion, and I confess it seemed repugnant to my feelings to join in boisterous mirth or loud anticipations of our safety. But, dearest girl, another trial soon awed the most inconsiderate, the weather changed, and a tremendous storm threatened the annihilation of all our prospects; for three days and three nights our frail vessel weathered the tempest, and then we were driven to land on the opposite side of the island, to that on which our late companions were sheltered.

After all our exertions, we were compelled to walk for six hours barefooted, faint, and weary and ill, before we could reach that part of Trinstan de Cunha which was the habitation of the settlers. You will believe the sight of our old companions, and even the rude comforts we experienced in our change of situation were truly estimated. After awaking from a sleep, so sound and long, that it rather excited some fears that it might prove endless; and then refreshed by meeting with potatoes for my first meal, I began to feel again renovated, and watched with unceasing attention for any glimpse of the most distant vessel. We were, however, detained here two months; and after apparently endless anxieties and disappointments we were all embarked in a vessel that had

been in sight of Trinstan de Cunha, and successfully hailed by our watchful party. I cannot omit to relate, that on the first view of our figures, the Captain refused to take in such outlandish savage-looking objects; for in truth, neither our apparel nor personal comforts had materially improved since our transportation to this island. I must also add, that a female servant belonging to one of the ladies, conceiving herself to have been ill treated by her mistress, refused to accompany us to the Cape, and insisted on being left at Trinstan de Cunha with the settlers, and it is imagined, that promises of future greatness, and the persuasions of the only female of their party, induced the deluded girl to become the second lady of the island.

" Follow us now my Mary to the Cape, and judge, if you can, how valued were the common comforts of life. Cleanliness, a change of apparel, and customary food were indescribable luxuries. I think I shall never forget the first breakfast I partook of, the refreshment of tea, and above all, the blessing of bread. which for above six months had never passed our lips. We received every kind and hospitable attention from the inhabitants of the Cape, and our wonderful preservation seemed to interest every enquirer.

Before you receive this, we shall probably be again ploughing the watery deep, and your patience must be somewhat tried, ere you can have another letter from me; but cheer up, my dearest Mary, and remember that neither time nor distance will elude the watchful eye of Providence, nor render me less ardently attached to a being which renders life so valuable.

"I will indeed be observant of all your commands, and not unnecessarily run into danger, and be consoled with the thought, that our next eventful meeting will indissolubly unite us.

"I recollect with much satisfaction and pleasure, the group of amiable and excellent friends by whom you are surrounded, and to whom I owe such grateful acknowledgments for their unremitted kindness and hospitality; of course you will read to them the above interesting narrative, and whilst your sweet friend Mrs. Vincent will warmly enter into all your feelings, your sister may probably pronounce the shipwreck to be a judgment from heaven, for my reprobate contradiction of her favourite tenets. Mr. Coventry will make some profitable reflections, and our worthy divine will not scruple to call our preservation "the finger of God." Commend me to all with interest and affection; if I were

not in love with you, tell Mrs. Coventry I would not answer for the loss of my heart, but you will allow me to acknowledge I do esteem her very sincerely.

" That noble boy, Lord Charles, has, I trust, missed his friend and playmate; by the bye, Mary, one of those lovely little girls must hereafter be his choice. Time enough, dearest, when I return, to be at the settlement of that business. So adieu! and heaven bless you; I live on the hope of receiving your letters.

" Your fondly attached

" WILLIAM."

CHAPTER XVI.

Peace and serenity again shed their brightest influence on the estimable and friendly circle; the comments and observations on Captain Melford's wonderful account gave rise to many hopes and tender fears, and characteristic remarks from all parties. Willoughby one morning unintentionally surprised Miss Brudenel in tears, and fearing an intrusion, he would have immediately withdrawn.

"These are not tears of sorrow," she instantly exclaimed, "nor will I scruple to tell you the cause of my emotion." She had a book in her hand, and pointing to a passage she said,—

"Is it in nature for me ever to read this passage, pointing to the 107th Psalm, without being affected by it? How expressive is every line of the event by which poor William had nearly lost his life, and of the superintendance of a protecting providence;" and she added, smilingly, "as it is Sunday, I will leave the book for your meditation, convinced that however unfashionable the study, you will not put in down

in derision, but estimate the still varied emotions of my mind, when I think of dear William's miraculous escape from a watery grave.

"I see your friend Mr. Donavan approaching, I cannot leave you in better company."

Mr. Donavan aroused Willoughby from a reverie, who instantly exclaimed,—"Why are women in general so trifling,—so open to all the delusions of flattery,—so inconsistent in conduct; either bigoted to the narrow prejudices of an uncultivated mind, or totally averse for intellectual converse, or anything like serious conversation?"

"There are exceptions to general rules, Willoughby,—that sweet girl, your sister's friend, unites the sprightliness of youth with the rationality of maturer age. How properly she has felt the wonder-working hand of providence in Captain Melford's late preservation."

Willoughby then described her manner and sentiments when she put the book into his hands. "How many," he added, "from a false shame of being thought 'righteous over much,' would have encouraged a deceptive confusion, and with all the prettiness of affectation denied, having had one serious idea."

"None could have deserved your animadversions, that had so long associated with your inestimable sister. I candidly avow I never knew but one, so truly her counterpart."

"I consider Miss Brudenel as a second sister, and pronounce Melford to be a very happy man. I certainly observed, that you peculiarly felt the passages in the Psalms when you were in the desk this morning. There was a time, Donavan, when though I could feel the beauty of their general poetry, that every appropriate sentence, whether of prophecy, of consolation, or of penitential confession, was unheeded, or only perused as an ancient and oriental record. In fact, through the darkest era of my life, I was a sort of temporizing deist, not daring to deny the sacred truths of religion; but uninfluenced by their import, and contented with the conviction, that if a man cannot believe as he pleases, the unlimited mercy of God would not severely condemn the mental or practical infirmities of human nature."

"Poor human nature, Willoughby, has indeed much to bear, from the self deception of man. I do believe, you yourself were not a 'scorner,' as is the term of religion, but by continually associating with those, whose false wit, ridiculed

every thing just and serious, you were betrayed into a thousand errors, and finding it impossible to confute their arguments, you were by degrees so inured to vain and blasphemous criticism, that its horrible tendency, in some degree, lost the power of disgust, and led you to live the life of a Heathen."

"You have too truly delineated the state of my former mind; nor could you ever have pronounced my reformation to be permanent, had not my change of habits been founded on an entire change of opinions, on a firm conviction of the sacred truths of revelation, and of the awful certainty of an immortal state of existence.

"You must not, however, accuse me, Donavan, of presumptuously thanking God I am not as other men are—mercy must ever be the petition of the penitent: and whilst so many sources of innocent enjoyment are vouchsafed by a beneficent Creator, I humbly conceive it only requires that the free will of the creature should be strengthened from above, to enable us to choose the good, and avoid the evil,—to estimate the rational occupations of life, and to devote the talents committed to our care, to that improvement, which God and nature wisely intended."

"I have ever been of opinion, Willoughby, that to neglect our intellectual powers, is to hide one very valuable talent in the earth; that learning exalts and purifies the mind, and when directed in a proper channel, it contributes to ward off the blows of infidelity, to awaken and to inform the consciences of fallible men. The mistaken and illiterate only, can depreciate human learning and acquirements; an unlettered man may certainly attain the knowledge of his religious duties, but there is no law, human or divine, that forbids the most scientific and learned, from becoming altogether Christians.

"More harm accrues to religion by placing her in a gloomy and unsocial light, in limiting the acquirements of human intellect and genius, than some well disposed persons are willing to admit. Would God ever have bestowed the gifts of genius, and the diversities of taste, had he not intended them as improving blessings, and recreating powers, to unbend the mind, and exalt the understanding."

"Certainly not," Willoughby replied; "and I have indeed too often fatally witnessed a continuance in scepticism and vice, from the perversion of genius and of talent. I am grieved to acknowledge, that I myself have sometimes been

dazzled with a false and illusive wit, which by substituting ridicule for argument, seemed to triumph in the blasphemy of the hour, to crush the germ of every good propensity; and, by the pernicious influence of such evil communications, to corrupt the mind, the manners, and the heart.

"Donavan, before you, and the God who made me, let me gratefully avow, that the study of the Holy Scriptures has opened my mind to all those elevated principles which spiritualize our nature, and imprint on our soul the sacred image of God.

"I despise the cant of vain repetitions, and the forms without the essence of religion as much as any man can do; but to you I owe such a confession, that my hopes of salvation are truly and rightly founded,—to you, who with all a pastor's care, and the solicitude of friendship, have borne with my infirmities, and led me both by precept and example to a renunciation of errors and vices, both of the head and heart."

These sorts of conversations generally induced many reflections and remembrances of his poor misguided Ellinor. He spoke of Mr. Onslow's unfortunate marriage, and the necessarily disappointed views for his little girl. He mentioned Jane Aubrey, with great regard and in-

terest, and avowed that the effusions of her uncultivated mind, and the charitable care she had evinced both for his soul and body, when he appeared to belong to no one, first aroused his dormant faculties, and loudly proclaimed, that "God was no respecter of persons." "And now," he continued, "as I think, nay, I am resolved never to marry; my every exertion shall be doubly nerved, to place three interesting objects in comfort and independence.

"My mother, God bless her, though contented in a cottage, deserves every worldly good;—my child will learn from her, the blessing of an independent mind; and as to Jane Aubrey, her old age must be provided for, and the child's future subsistence and welfare safely secured."

All things proceeded in their usual course for some time. Miss Brudenel's sister was married to Sir James Osborn, and the novelty of her situation, the command of a house, carriage, and servants, combined to bewilder her mind and to flatter her vanity. Her face and figure were in reality equal in beauty and proportion to her sister's, but wanting that sweet intelligence of countenance which so distinguished Miss Brudenel; and ever accompanied by a precise and

formal manner, she had never received any marked attention from one sex; and by the other, she was generally accused of pride and inattention. Hence, the flattering partiality of Sir James Osborn soon ensured a favourable reception of his addresses, and hence, her rigid customs and principles were by degrees relaxed, in order to gain the tempting advantages before her. Some months after their marriage her conscience seemed to be awakened, by a chance conference with a former very strict associate, and she determined no longer to yield to the vanities of a wicked and mistaken world. In short, although Sir James was a very good natured man, and tolerated many innovations in his household; yet, when his still admired Maria neglected his essential comforts, reprobated his usual occupations, constrained him to listen to endless denunciations of the unconverted, curtailed the usual expenditure of the house, for love feasts, and necessitous brethren and preachers; when his meals were unsocial and joyless, and tears and lamentations for the state of his soul for ever met his ear; he could no longer command a naturally impetuous temper, and their discord was soon productive of very lamentable consequences. Sir James Os-

born might have been gently led by the woman he loved; but to have his indulgences misused, his authority called in question, and his wicked habits of the chace and field, constantly termed the road to the evil one, was more than his patience could bear; and every separation, but inhabiting the same house, soon took place between the ill matched pair. With loud and vain complaints he generally accosted Mr. Donavan, and frequently ended them, by exclaiming, "How could I think Maria like her sister!" Mr. and Mrs. Brudenel tried an interference in the business, without any salutary effect; and could only repeatedly affirm, "that they always clearly saw how Maria's pertinacity would end."

Miss Brudenel, like a consoling angel, gave not up the hope of bringing her sister to reason, and was the only person that could soothe the irritated Baronet.

CHAPTER XVII.

Willoughby and his worthy partner were rising in their profession, and attaining that celebrity which is generally the result of talent and perseverance; but Donavan had remarked, as time passed on, that Willoughby was more thoughtful than usual, and remained more in town than was good for his health or spirits; that unless Mrs. Coventry were quite alone, he often excused himself from spending part of the week with her; and, that he rarely made his usual visits at Beech Park. Not wishing to be questioned in regard to his remaining so much in town, Willoughby had faithfully promised Mrs. Coventry to return to the cottage on the following week to celebrate his little Ellinor's birth-day. The family from Beech Park, Mr. Donavan, and his protégé, were to be the only guests.

The first hour of the gala morning was devoted to religious and instructive conversation, in brief but impressive supplication to the Author of all good for a continuance of present

blessings, and grateful praises for past mercies. The manner in which a birth-day ought to be kept, was next argued by the youthful trio; and all had been too well taught, to pronounce that their own indulgences only were to be attended to. The servants of the household were respectively remembered; and dear good old Mrs. Mason was ever the first receiver of some appropriate gift. The children of the schools were next regaled with a wholesome dinner. The asylum which contained the aged poor was always visited by the happy party, leaving substantial tokens of each returning birth-day. Industry and good conduct among the cottagers were noticed and rewarded; and it sometimes happened, that the parents of an engaged couple petitioned that they might be married on one of the young ladies' birth-days. Mrs. Vincent, ever active and discriminating, seldom refused the request; and the duties and sports of the hour only varied with the changing season. On the present occasion, a beautiful and cheering day in summer gave zest to every occupation; and joined by a young companion of Lord Charles's, while their humble and more distant friends were singing their last rustic song, and retiring to their respective homes in order and

regularity, our several parties were enjoying themselves on the verdant lawn, having enlisted the three gentlemen and Miss Brudenel as their not unwilling playmates. The sports, which they had again commenced, were interrupted by a distant cry of horror and distress; and in a few moments Ellinor rushed towards them, and calling on her papa to save dear Miss Brudenell, "she has fallen into the water"—was all the sobbing child could say. Willoughby outstripped the party in their speed, and beheld Miss Brudenel struggling in the water; and ere she sunk to rise no more, he had plunged into the stream, and with some difficulty raised her on the bank.

All means were used to restore her to animation; and when she was sufficiently recovered to understand who had been her preserver, she exclaimed, "My kind friend, how dear William will thank you!"

The fact was, the young Ellinor, wild with spirits, had ventured too near the water's edge; and a part of the bank giving way, she had overbalanced her own strength, and had nearly fallen into the stream. Miss Brudenel, with great presence of mind, seized hold of her frock, and the

necessary struggle that ensued saved the child, but precipitated herself into the water beyond her depth; and a few moments longer, without the aid of Willoughby's powerful arm, might have proved fatal.

"My dear Miss Brudenel, by your presence of mind you have probably saved a loved but heedless child from death, and restored to a father one of his remaining treasures"—was the only reply Willoughby attempted, when receiving the grateful acknowledgments of all.

Some time after the foregoing accident had occurred, Willoughby made known the necessity, from professional business, of taking a distant journey; that he might be absent some months; and, as Edinburgh would be his head-quarters, he half seriously prayed Mrs. Coventry to give her apprehensions to the winds, as he really should not excite them by venturing on the waves. She naturally asked, why his partner could not save him the trouble of such a journey? This, and other questions, were very reasonably answered; and at length he pleaded the great chance, by such a change, of completely renovating his health and spirits, which, perhaps, had of late a little suffered from the necessity of sedentary application to business.

"And now, my dear mother," he added, "as I have long wished to travel over Scotland, I cannot give up to my partner the privilege of the indulgence, and the advantage of uniting pleasure and profit."

Mrs. Coventry's feelings, even when proceeding from maternal affection, were never allowed to conquer the suggestions of sense and reason; and she parted from Willoughby, for perhaps many months, with apparent resolution; her hopes, and fears, and regrets, being buried in her own bosom.

Willoughby gave no further explanation for the almost sudden arrangement of his northern journey; but he did not depart without some despatches from Donavan to his young pupil's other trustee, and a description of the situation of the prison, (as he termed it,) whither his still tenderly remembered Matilda had been sacrificed.

Business had called Mr. Vincent to town a few days previously to Willoughby's departure; nor could he conceal his regrets from Donavan, to have observed Willoughby most earnest in conversation with a wretched looking female, even supporting her with kindness as they were

sitting on a bench in the Green Park; he having been near enough to judge, that Willoughby's promises had excited first the indignation, and then the tears of his companion.

"You will believe," Mr. Vincent continued, "that I justly disclaim and abhor the meanness of listening unwarrantably to the affairs of others; but, in this instance, the delightful theory of Willoughby's principles, the apparent correctness of his late conduct, and the shade of mystery he has at times evinced for so sudden an absence, connected with the scene that followed, appeared to be so completely at variance, that I really feel excused if I judged harshly at the time, and now disclose to you what ensued. Willoughby seemed to be claiming from the girl some promise: she wrung his hand in agony; and at length they both arose from the seat, and putting her arm within his own, they walked to the first hackney-coach that offered, and were driven to a house in Piccadilly, near the spot where all the stages are continually drawing up. He now almost forced her into the house, and I saw them no more. That poor Willoughby should hypocritically descant on the follies of his former conduct, and——"

Mr. Donavan here interrupted him, saying, "I will not hear him condemned, though I must own appearances are not in his favour. I could almost stake my existence, Vincent, that just on the eve of his departure, he would have neither time nor inclination to follow the haunts of depravity; and, that even had the temptation of society so inebriated his senses—that he had been induced to throw the dice, or yield to other extravagances—he would not hypocritically have shaded the folly by the veil of religion, he would have awakened to penitence and remorse; nor could his open brow, and confidential discourse, so continually pronounce the peace within, unless he possessed the blessing of an approving conscience."

"My dear friend," Mr. Vincent replied, "you are not talking to a mere man of the world, who would term all reasoning preaching, that does not suit the latitude of his own principles. It is from the peculiar circumstances of our friend's reformation, from perhaps the rare instance of low and disgraceful pursuits having been exchanged for useful occupations and domestic blessings, and, if not by a miracle, in a very short space of time—that I felt disappointed to

witness the solicitude of Willoughby's conduct towards a frail and wretched female; for, in truth, he exemplified a more than common interest, sufficient to prove to me they were not the acquaintance of an hour."

Mr. Donavan continued to affirm, Willoughby would himself elucidate every suspicion of the present moment. "Hypocrisy," he added, "cannot accompany the sincere convert to religion. Our friend will again stand his ground, and is above all subterfuge and deceit: and of this I am so convinced, that for worlds I would not hint to any one the facts you have mentioned."

Willoughby was however unavoidably detained in town another week on particular business, as stated by himself to Mr. Donavan, even feelingly lamenting that circumstances would not allow him the dear indulgence of another visit to friends so beloved, and that the instant time and opportunity allowed, he would write more fully on the subject.

Mr. Donavan, though he exonerated Willoughby from the accusation of hypocrisy, became very anxious to have a satisfactory account from himself of his safe arrival at Edinburgh, particularly, he having heard, as casual

intelligence from a tradesman in town, that Mr. Coventry had kindly assisted him with money and counsel to recover a long protracted and fashionable debt, and at the period when a letter from Scotland was anxiously expected.

CHAPTER XVIII.

At length, Willoughby addressed Mr. Donavan, from Edinburgh, as follows:—

"Harassed as I was in town, by unexpected occupation, interfering with prior arrangements, I could not sufficiently command my time to give you more than a few hurried lines. Believe me, my dear friend, that I felt so disgusted with the extreme heat and bustle of London, that I looked forward with the impatience of a school-boy, for change of trammels and change of employments; and I could scarcely imagine myself to be the same person, who had once voluntarily sacrificed time and existence to the lounges of fashionable resort, or to the more disgraceful pursuits of an unprincipled or dissipated mind.

"I arrived at the expected time in this city, safe and well; I am grateful for the universal hospitality I meet with, though not always disposed to avail myself of the kind attentions I experience. I hope soon to gain a temporary liberty, and to extend my travels; and when I

have delivered your despatches, and reached that part of the country wherein the remains of your regretted Matilda are deposited, you shall receive an accurate account of the estate and premises, and of the preservation of the mausoleum erected to her memory. And now, Donavan, I will tell you of a little adventure, which certainly did contribute to protract my stay in town; but without entering on unnecessary particulars, I must bring to your remembrance the ci-devant Louisa Harrington,—the late gay and blooming Lady Morton,—the once cherished companion of my Ellinor. Strolling one evening, for air, through the Green Park, I met with this now miserable being,—pale, hagged, the shadow of her former self,—and, but for the peculiar tone of her voice, I should hardly have recognized her.

"It is impossible to describe her first burst of indignation, when I conjured her to desist from desperate purposes; or her subsequent acknowledgments, when I tendered her the means of relief; she was literally near starving, and so weak from a recent fever, that I was compelled to assist her with my arm, before we could reach a coach, to convey her to a place of shelter. Her story was a too common one, and briefly this:—

Irritated, as she said, beyond endurance by her tyrant husband's barbarity, she had accepted the protection of a gay deceiver, who soon left her to all the horrors of poverty; and such were its horrors, that her proud spirit bended, even to ask succour from an injured husband. The consequences of his taunting refusal, sunk her to the lowest abyss of misery; and she avowed, that she could not have lived many days longer in her present weak condition.

"I hope her penitence arises from real sorrow, not from the intensity of suffering; but amidst her protestations of amendment, some flashes of an unconquered spirit, contradicted her apparent humility. Such a wreck of beauty before me, once the idol of my then too lovely Ellinor, now a shadow,—a being apparently hastening to a premature grave, could not fail to excite my sincerest compassion. She was too ill to contend, or to object to any plan I proposed; I accompanied her to a person who lodged in Piccadilly, a relation of Dame Aubrey, who agreed to receive her, till I could think of some more permanent situation for her advantage.

"I wrote to our good old Dame the next morning, and her answer was very agreeable to

my scheme: she assented to all I proposed; and it was soon settled that this relative in town, should immediately take her to Dame Aubrey's; but, alas! for above a week, the wretched invalid's life was despaired of, and a rapid decline, it was pronounced, would probably hasten her to the grave; that change of air, and good nursing, were the only chances left for her partial recovery. Fortunately, a press of business kept me in town till I had the satisfaction of hearing from Mrs. Aubrey, that her patient had become quite composed, and not much the worse for the journey. I must forbear all comment or reflections on this now suffering creature's conduct. She is, in all human probability, not long for this world; and having cautioned Mrs. Aubrey, in regard to moderation, on the subject of grace and conversion, I know not with whom I could place her, where she would be so well nursed, and, in all respects, tenderly treated. I have written to apprize Sir Thomas Morton of the poor creature's situation and penitence, but from a variety of circumstances, my hopes are not sanguine of his salutary interference.

"I think my absence from home may be protracted beyond the period I first mentioned; I place so entire a dependance on my invaluable

partner, that professional business will not hasten my return.

"But, Donavan, why should I shrink from giving you the principal reasons for this newly awakened wish of change of scene and occupation? I am not now to endeavour to convince you, that the human mind is variable and deceptive; how often have I formerly deceived myself, particularly in my conduct towards poor Ellinor; and how often, in the hour of trial, have I exclaimed,—'Man delights me not, nor woman either.' I need not recapitulate the subsequent folly of a romantic passion, nor my dishonourable regard of the laws of hospitality; neither need I dwell on the disappointments and temptations that led to a criminal neglect of all the social and domestic duties of life. A farther preface cannot be necessary to one, who knows too well the sins and offences of my youth, and the errors which have arisen from indecision of character, and an unwarrantable love of the pleasures and vanities of the world. In all due humility, may I not add, that with a change of character, new ideas of enjoyment, new perceptions of the rationality of our nature have arisen; and that inclination unites both with reason and religion, to urge and to com-

mand a timely retreat from temptation, in whatever form she would assail the imbecility of man.

"Donavan, the day of romance is past; I cannot now write sonnets to a 'beautiful eyebrow,' nor exalt the fairest of God's created beings to angels or divinities; but, I can feel in their fullest extent, all the perfections of a lovely woman's character; nor boast insensibility to an interesting and soul-inspired countenance. If I have sketched the outlines of Miss Brudenel's countenance, I will not retract the above affirmation. She is the affianced wife of another, and my conscience acquits me of ever presuming on a word or look, that angels might not have witnessed; but having daily been associated with her, in all the little scenes of domestic life, and consequently assured of the amiable and prepossessing qualities of her mind, I have felt in absence a want of interest—an ennuï in my usual occupations, which it were folly to dwell upon; and whilst her conduct under her late trials, and the unexpected restoration of her heart's dearest hopes of happiness, in the marked and preserved existence of her long attached friend, excites my admiration, it induces me to shun for a time the voice of the charmer, that I

may henceforth only think of her, absent or present, as the unenvied prize of another! There was a time, Donavan, when the hacknied terms—friendship, esteem, or dictates of honour, would have led me to cultivate the present enjoyment of Miss Brudenel's society, to have presumed on her fascinating sisterly attentions, and to claim the privilege of being her guardian and protector, during the absence of her friend;—some badinage, which you must recollect, might have authorised the sportive pretension. I presume not to pronounce that others, with more native stability of character than I can boast of, may brave and meet a newly-discovered danger; fatal experience has taught me the fallacy of such presumption; and, that it is less cowardly to fly from the peril of an eye, than to sink under the inflicted wound.

"Most seriously, Donavan, though I should blush to affirm that I was yielding to a hopeless or criminal passion, I am persuaded my present partiality towards Miss Brudenel might have increased, by the indulgence of her society; and I am as firmly persuaded, that time and absence, which strengthen requited affection, are the surest antidotes for ill-placed regard, or involuntary prepossession. You and my dear mo-

ther, must have observed how much I have remained in town, when I could have enjoyed the dear society at Beech Park—but enough on such a subject, henceforward no vain repetitions shall disgrace my pen; from you I neither dread raillery nor animadversion for the vacillation of my feelings; and, that you should not in any respect attach the slightest mystery to my late apparent absence of manner, is the chief reason for wasting a few moments on such a useless topic. It cannot be necessary to give this letter out of your own hand; read only those lines to our valued circle that speak of indifferent subjects.

"I have ceased to regret my dear child's future prospects of wealth, but I shall never cease to wonder, that a man of Mr. Onslow's character could have married an illiterate and artful woman. So it is!—how great is the most sapient in theory, and in the condemnation of others; and frequently how weak in conduct, when self is the predominant object, and passion is at variance with reason. That my little Ellinor is far removed from a home that so misled her poor mother; that she is daily brightening under the eye of such valued and exemplary beings as have taken the charge of her education, is to me

a never failing source of comfort. Oh, should I live to see her religious without fanaticism, well informed without pedantry, and accomplished in all the elegant acquirements of her sex, without the affectation of superiority; still less shall I regret the dangerous gift of early independence to a beautiful and inexperienced female; and be it my present care to exert every faculty, to ensure for her future good, a fortune, that may ultimately procure her the comforts and luxuries of life. To think that this beloved girl may rock the cradle of my declining age, is a stimulus that an affectionate parent only can feel and properly estimate.

"Donavan, this is an inexhaustible subject: I once asked you to give me your unbiassed opinion on the first modes of education; your excellent theory is now so reduced to practice, and your noble protégé, and our two little girls, are daily receiving such salutary instruction, that I have really been enabled to make comments, and form my own opinions on the subject. But I must come to a close; and only add, that I am ever,

"Yours, most faithfully,

"W. Coventry."

The lapse of two years had been marked with common and not unexpected events. The wretched Lady Morton lingered a few months, and died under Jane Aubrey's roof; the manner of her death gave great uneasiness to the well meaning woman, and she wrote in her own way, a prolix account to Willoughby, of the obstinacy of the poor lady, who would neither suffer any reference to the state of her soul, nor follow the prescriptions either of doctor or nurse.—"Ah, well-a-day!" she concluded, "she would not pray for a 'heart of flesh;' she would not bewail her sins, nor ask forgiveness of her husband; even when I told her how good God Almighty was to all miserable sinners, if they were led by the spirit to the blessed Lord. Oh, how different did you look and hope for mercy, when you once got hold of the heavenly book!——Alas, she once said, (and it was her dying word,) 'Woman, torment me not;'—and the Lord permitted her not to speak again. Well, it was the Lord's will that she should not be called by his heavenly grace in this wicked world."

Mrs. Aubrey, after continuing in her usual strain, ended her epistle, with assuring Willoughby his directions had been attended to,

and his letters sent as directed. The funeral and all things were arranged by Mr. Vincent; for the injured and vindictive husband had cast her off for ever.

CHAPTER XIX.

Willoughby was rising in reputation and fortune, beyond the most sanguine expectations of his friends; and he often half jestingly declared, that he thought honourable employment was the best antidote for an unrequited partiality: certain it was, that a well-timed absence, and the conviction of Miss Brudenel's engagement to another, had checked his growing prepossession, and he could now occasionally meet her as a brother and a friend.

Mr. Harcourt's stated visits to London, increased Willoughby's esteem and gratitude; the old gentleman ever tenaciously adhering to his professions of a future remembrance of the young Ellinor, his god-daughter. From him Willoughby had lately heard, that Mr. Onslow's infirm state of health received little alleviation from the society of his ignorant wife; and it was generally believed, that he truly repented of his folly. Mr. Harcourt also mentioned, that the son and heir was a very delicate, sickly little being; but Mr. Onslow ever expressed the most querulous anx-

iety for his health and welfare, and declared to Mr. Harcourt, that, but for the consideration of the child, he should long ere this have separated from the mother;—generally ending his list of grievances, with lamentation that Ellinor had not left him a boy.

We have before observed, that Willoughby, since his reformation, had been taught to look to a more permanent prospect for happiness, than riches could bestow; and he reflected on the pecuniary deprivations of his child with Christian philosophy.—"My dearest mother, make her what you have made my inestimable sister,—like yourself,—and I shall never regret she is not the heiress of unbounded wealth;"—was often his earnest petition. The juvenile trio improved in every desirable acquirement: Lord Charles was often the monitor, as well as the companion of Elizabeth and Ellinor; and Mr. Donavan certainly did entertain some romantic ideas that his childish preference of Elizabeth might grow with his increasing years. Charles would often say, "I do believe Ellinor is the handsomest, but Elizabeth's heavenly temper is unparalleled." In all that was lovely and excellent, the beauteous cousins could scarcely be excelled, and yet their characters were different,

and their beauty in a varied style. Elizabeth was tall and womanly for her age, with a countenance expressive of every soft and feminine virtue, and fascinating as perfect features and complexion could make her; and as she increased in years, her conversation was most attractive: in fact, she was the exact counterpart of her mother, and at the age of fifteen they might have been mistaken for sisters, Mrs. Vincent still retaining the bloom of youth, and her figure scarcely inferior to Elizabeth's elegant form. Ellinor, two or three years younger, long sported the naïvete of childhood; and her growth not being so rapid as Elizabeth's, she was sometimes considered as a mere child, till an unconscious trait of superior knowledge, evinced she had been taught by no common instructor. She gave every promise to possess the faultless figure of her mother, but her features and expression of her countenance, began to wear the "softened image of her father," having in some degree lost the striking resemblance of her infancy. In real goodness of heart she undoubtedly equalled her cousin Elizabeth, but their feelings on many occasions were differently regulated: hasty judgment, and violent agitation of mind, on particular subjects, and in the incidental trials of life, were

generally the result of Ellinor's opinions and sensibility; whilst Elizabeth endeavoured to reflect before she condemned, and lost not the traces of feeling with the passing hour. Lord Charles had discrimination enough to observe their different characters, and treated them both with the affection of a brother. Elizabeth was oftener his judicious counsellor, whilst the still childish appearance of Ellinor, courted the youthful frolic or the sportive game; and he generally ended with this opinion (when speaking of his lovely playmate),—"She is so very young; but the companion of Elizabeth will soon be as perfect as herself."

Sir James and Lady Osborn were indeed, "paired, not matched," the delusions of the one, and the ignorance and boisterous habits of the other, were still inimical to domestic peace. Sir James had seen what he called, a famous dog-kennel, and he determined that his numerous canine companions should be similarly accommodated. He had also become, or thought he had become, a connoisseur in the beauty of birds; and bought, without discrimination, every apparent rarity he met with, till he was resolved to build an aviary to preserve them, and to amuse himself.

Having carelessly mentioned these plans before Maria, she read him a lecture on the sin of devoting so much time and expense for the comfort of brute creatures; that the building of the aviary would cost more than would distribute to the necessity of many a saint, and that the misspending of the talents committed to his care "was a suggestion of the evil one, and that he could not too manfully fight against the snare."

Here Sir James burst into an unconquerable laugh, and good humouredly said,—"Come, come—if you will go on your own way, let me pursue mine in tranquillity. I cannot argue with you, but this I know, you might once have led me to any thing reasonable, and upon my soul, I believe——"

She interrupted,—"In mercy mention not your precious soul in so wicked a manner."

"Well, I will not, Maria; but I must have two courses to-day, I have invited some of the first men in the county."

She held up her hands and her eyes to heaven; and said, "Will you give up the dog-kennel and aviary, and let me have the money for better purposes."

"That's a good one; I'll be d——d if I do. Now harkye, Maria,—I have plenty of money,

and I will spend it as I please. I will relieve real distress, and also build my aviary; and more than that I will be henceforth master of my own house. Recollect, Maria, there are worse means of throwing your money away, than the innocent plans I have determined on."

"Oh, that I should have married such a reprobate!—"

"And, oh,"—(mimicking her)—"that I should have married such a heartless saint!—"

It is needless to comment on these altercations; regrets, reproaches, and violence on one side, and tears on the other, concluded the above, and many such like discordant meetings; and, as has been before affirmed, led the disappointed husband to live only on his hunter's back, or in the midnight revel, encouraging the delusions of intemperance, to drown any chance reflection of his mind.

Mr. and Mrs. Brudenel sought in vain to convince Maria she was throwing away her own happiness;—to leave father and mother, and every near and dear connection,—to give up almost the common necessaries of life, and to despise the animadversion of the rational part of the world,—"to suffer for righteousness sake," were all deemed praiseworthy trials, and salutary per-

secutions for them who were led by the spirit; and our fair enthusiast continued to render prayer and preaching—the word of exhortation and spiritual melody, not the means of salvation, but the exclusive business of life. Miss Brudenel, in the true spirit of Christianity, ever sought, both by precept and example, to win her sister back to sense and reason. With Mr. Donavan, Maria would not now argue; he was not a Gospel preacher, and she belonged to the household of faith.

CHAPTER XX.

The time was nearly approaching for Miss Brudenel to expect the return of Captain Melford. She had of late been less at Beech Park than formerly, in order to prove of use and comfort to her solitary parents; and in due time the ship arrived, which was to bring her the eventful letter—the harbinger of her dear friend's arrival from India.

One morning Ellinor ran into Mrs. Coventry's dressing-room, exclaiming—"Oh, grandmamma, pray come to dear Miss Brudenel, she is in such distress. The postman gave her a newspaper, when she was meeting him to take some expected letters.—Pray make haste, I must run to her and tell her you insist that she will come into the house."

When Mrs. Coventry met Miss Brudenel, she found Ellinor's account not an exaggerated one. And looking to the distressing paragraph, she read the statement of a duel which had taken place at Madras—the regiment mentioned, and the initials of the names too plainly denoting who were the parties.

By the same post Mr. Vincent received a letter from that friend in the country, whom it may be remembered he had so promptly assisted, on a distressing pecuniary occasion; and whose son belonged to Captain Melford's regiment. High in spirit, in reputation, and in ideas of worldly honour, these intimate associates had met with mutual hostile intentions,—the quarrel originated in a trivial cause, but ended in a fatal and serious manner.

A convivial meeting had elevated the spirits of both; an unintentional misunderstanding about a trifling wager gave rise to some harsh expressions on one side, and contemptuous language on the other; and the laws of worldly honour pronounced a duel to be inevitable!—All was arranged with decision and privacy;—and the next morning Captain Melford ceased to breathe. When the wretched father of the survivor received the fatal news, every trial of an eventful life seemed to weigh lightly, when compared with a son's lost peace of mind, and the ruin of his future prospects.

After dwelling in all the pathos of parental grief for so unexpected a calamity, he avowed to Mr. Vincent, that this son, the hope of the family, was probably lost to his country and to

his friends for ever; that he had looked to him as the eventual solace and support of his mother and sisters: for that his own career was nearly run, and that the present shock would probably hasten him with sorrow to the grave.—"Knowing, as I do," he continued, "the inmost recesses of my poor boy's feelings, I am convinced that no time nor repentance can restore peace to his lacerated mind; but, Vincent, read the letter, which I herewith enclose; I and all with me, are incapable of the task of transcribing it. Alas! it has informed us that the evil extends to your more immediate neighbourhood. May Heaven support the now suffering object of poor Melford's well-tried affection!—Return the letter as soon as possible—I can hold the pen no longer.—

THE LETTER.

"How will my father believe that I live to address him under distressful and criminal circumstances!—that though acquitted by the judgment of man, I must ever stand arraigned at a heavenly tribunal. Be still, my nerves, and cease the throbbings of my heart and head, to enable me to write with something like connec-

tion and perspicuity.—Fain would I prepare you for the scene of horror, impetuosity of temper has in a great measure been the cause of. I must briefly narrate facts, for dreadful would be my comments. At the close of a convivial party, heated with wine, argument led to assertion, assertion to contradiction and opprobrious language. I, alas! would neither offer nor receive an apology; and mad by the intemperance of the moment, offered immediately to settle the business with my opponent; this of course was not allowed, and every thing was arranged for a meeting on the following morning. I went to sleep with these words on my lips—'No one shall insult me with contempt, nor doubt my word; for honour is the soldier's treasure!'—I must be candid; I should certainly have considered the affair less indignantly as the morning dawned, but for the entrance of a thoughtless and dissipated companion, who with pernicious counsel sought to persuade me, that unless I would be branded for a coward, I must meet my man;—that a duel constituted a prime fellow, and that apologies were only fit for women, to sport their strife of tongues.

"How I could listen to such ribaldry is now past my comprehension, and my father, how

shall I tell you that the man I was doomed to meet, was Captain Melford!

"To the latest moment he would have received my apology, but we fired, and he fell, to rise no more. I was also seriously hurt. He grasped my hand, saying, 'let us exchange a mutual forgiveness,' but nature's last convulsive throbs were at hand, and his dying groans, even then, suppressed with manly firmness, have never ceased to vibrate on my ear.

"I fainted from loss of blood, with officious kindness I was removed from the dreadful scene, and every prompt arrangement executed to ensure my recovery and safety. With returning sense, what language can express my remorse, horror, and repentance! Had I possessed the world and all its treasures, what a poor exchange it would have been for a peaceful conscience! The victim of my impetuosity was universally regretted,—his character was a compound of bravery and humanity, but shrinking from 'the world's dread laugh,' he had not the courage to refuse a challenge, and I became his murderer. Alas! no sophistry of reasoning can alter the term. The duellist meets his adversary, in the decided expectation of losing his own life, or taking the life of a fellow creature;

and, generally speaking, because other beings of mortality from a contrary conduct, might stigmatize him with cowardice. What a revolution in my own opinions and feelings has a short period given rise to! and I now think, that the only wretched excuse for rash and various instances of duelling, is, that they originate in a weak dread of the world's censure, bordering on a deplorable scepticism, and a disbelief of a future life and judgment. I sometimes derive one shade of comfort from the conviction, that the being my unlucky hand sent unprepared into the presence of his Maker, was not an infidel or a profligate; but still, who shall presumptuously say, 'I need no preparation?' I trace a few lines with apparent calmness; and then, my only cry is mercy, mercy, for a miserable offender! Neither are these the hasty effusions of a horror stricken mind, which the world and its illusions may successfully mitigate; like another Cain the murderous mark is on my conscience, and if there be an eternity to hope for, or to dread, where is the argument which can convert wrong into right, a forbidden action to well doing, or to an excusable impulse of honourable feeling? Oh! could the duellist, (whatever be his motive for outraging the laws of God),

for one hour experience the tumults of my mind, and know how truly life is a burden, and yet how dreadful is the thought of death and judgment, he might be led to consider the awful consequences of taking in his own hand the sword of mistaken retribution.

" There may possibly be some cases,—what would I say! my pen seems to deal in unprofitable contradictions; and vainly I look around for the soothing voice of human friendship, to tell me there is peace for a repentant mind. Alas, my father! I who have braved danger in all its perilous approaches, who have welcomed the din of war, and stood fearless in the battle's rage, am now the sport of every varied feeling, and suffering from that mental agitation, which no time nor resolution can conquer. The glazed unconscious eye of poor Melford continually appals my wakened senses, and haunts my midnight dreams, whilst his immortal soul seems to warn me, that there is a day of judgment.

" Whilst he retained a few minutes of consciousness, he entreated, by half sentences and signs, that a miniature which he wore near his heart, might remain and be buried with him. Oh! may the valued original be smpported by a merciful God; and poor consolation it were for

her to know, that I would cheerfully sacrifice my own existence could I restore the murdered object of her innocent affections.

" Forgive me, my dear and honoured father, if I have disburthened my own heart to the sad distress of yours. I have written at intervals, and scarcely know how I have expressed myself. By the next ship you shall hear again from

" Your deeply distressed,
but affectionate son."

Miss Brudenel, in her heartfelt sorrow and disappointment of all her dearest hopes, did not frantickly accuse heaven of injustice and cruelty, but imagined, that to sink in silence to the peaceful grave would soon be her allotted fate. Mr. and Mrs. Brudenel kindly spared her to Mrs. Vincent's solicitations to be removed to Beech Park, and there, sedulously guarded from her sister's severe denunciations of God's judgments, and final condemnation of the non-elect and unconverted, she received every soothing attention which unpretending religion could bestow, and all the affectionate sympathy which the exigencies of the case required from the exertions of human friendship.

Mrs. Coventry reprobated with every Christian argument the often fatal custom of duelling.

"And yet," exclaimed Willoughby, "there are some cases, probably those, at which the poor fellow hinted, where the trial would be great indeed, to subdue the feelings of human nature; where affronts, or rather injuries are imposed on a wife, a mother, or a child,—their reputation or fortune endangered, their rectitude of principle weakened, or their virtue and innocence sacrificed to the arts of seduction. May heaven avert from me the trial of forbearance! for I much fear no earthly arguments could induce a patient endurance of such crying wrongs,—such a total wreck of the fairest prospects of life."

Mrs. Coventry, shuddering, could only articulate, "Oh my dear Willoughby."

Mr. Donavan said,—"the candour of your confession does not cover its deplorable sophistry; nor I trust need you to be reminded that revenge must ever widen the evil it seeks to mitigate, without following the various and able arguments, which the pen of the moralist has ever enforced against the lamentable custom of duelling;—let us turn to the case in point, and imagine if we can, the affliction of a late happy

family, and more especially the heart rending sorrow of one dear and individual sufferer. Shall we not be fatally convinced that all is the result of undisciplined passions, misguided opinions, and a preference of the judgment of man, to the judgment of God."

"Donavan, there is no controverting the statement of truth; but the time was, when I should decidedly have acted, perhaps contrary to every better feeling. I certainly now see things in a different light, though I cannot fail to repeat my earnest hopes that no trial of resolution may ever await me."

"Men who live in the world, Willoughby, are however so liable to receive imaginary affronts, that unless guarded by a higher principle than mere human resolution, the language of defiance is generally the prelude to the evil in question; and hence the inebriated coxcomb, or the boasting infidel, may involve the sober minded in unsought and fatal quarrels.

"How often is the theatre productive of an exchange of hostilities, from the rudeness of one party, and the impatience of the other; and there have been cases, where even a quarrel about a dog, or mistaken conceptions of a fa-

vourite horse's value, have estranged man from man, and stamped on him the mark of murderer. How trivial appears the cause that reduced poor Melford to a premature death! and his opponent's impetuosity of temper has undone him."

"He is much to be pitied," Willoughby interrupted, "my former association with the gay and dissipated, leads me to imagine, that he is probably surrounded by miserable comforters, at so awful a juncture; for too well I have experienced that worldly consolations cannot avail to quell the tumult of the mind's unceasing accusations."

"Your conclusions, Willoughby, are natural, and, it may be, too truly founded. I have yet only written hastily to my afflicted friend, but I certainly purpose to address both father and son," Mr. Vincent replied, "and to speak as much consolation to both, as the extremity of the case will admit of. But my heart and hand must tremble in the attempt, when I contemplate the late blooming and happy countenance of our suffering young friend at Beech Park; when I observe, that though she is grateful for Elizabeth's well timed attentions, the despair-

ing conviction that Melford is lost to her in this world for ever, is the mournful and only feeling of her soul."

Willoughby paced the room in a hurried and agitated manner, saying;—"She will never conquer grief so deeply founded, but sinking to an early grave, increase the anguished feelings of poor Melford's destroyer."

"Not so I trust," Mrs. Coventry said, "Miss Brudenel's piety is more permanently founded, and though she bend, she will not sink beneath the stroke. Besides, how innumerable are the instances, where grief does not kill, where the mind's elasticity returns, and days of contentment, if not of happiness cheer the path of life."

Willoughby here indulged this mental reservation; "that, he could now approach her as a brother and a friend, and though she might still be lost to him for ever, if the silent sympathy of the sincerest commiseration, should ever afford a moment's respite from the bitterness of her heart-felt regrets, he should have something more to live for, and with his own Ellinor, Miss Brudenel would divide his purest affections."

"On the subject of duelling," Mr. Vincent continued, "I much fear, that were it possible

to adduce new and more striking arguments against the practice, than have already been committed to paper, the scoff of the infidel would frequently prevail, and the dreaded accusation of a cowardly spirit, nerve the unstable mind with that deceptive courage, which may not be improperly termed, a species of insanity."

"Would reasonable and accountable beings," said Mr. Donavan, "think what they now are, and what they may be, either from constitutional rashness, or determined revenge; that an eternal state of happiness or misery must be the consequence of our actions in this probationary state, we might suppose that on all occasions a deliberate contempt of the commands of God, would never prove the source of condemnation. Eternity is an awful thought; and it is scarcely possible that some conviction of its truth, during life, must occasionally disturb the most presumptuous."

"The decided duellist," Mr. Vincent interrupted, "if he have any vague ideas, that there is a bourne from which no traveller returns, places death, judgment and futurity at an immeasurable distance from himself, and is engrossed only by the interests of the present hour; but generally speaking, we may venture

to affirm, that the blood-thirsty and revengeful man, has no sense of religion at all, to impede the gratification of his ungoverned passions.

"There can scarcely be a greater misfortune to a reflecting mind, than to be implicated in a duel; and although, I certainly think it is a far greater proof of courage to refuse a challenge than to accept one, I earnestly hope with our friend Willoughby, that no such trial will ever await me."

"After all our hopes, and all our arguments," Mr. Donavan replied, "there cannot be a more decided negative or prohibition on the subject to man, than the impressive words,—'Thou shalt do no murder;' and till human ingenuity can alter their plain and awful import, till the command of God can be slighted with impunity; he who deliberately meets another with the hostile intention of committing murder, or of being called to an instant account himself at a heavenly tribunal, can have little right to expect that the balance of mercy will outweigh the scale of justice."

Mrs. Coventry said, "if such a thought bring not conviction to every doubting mind, of the enormity of the crime of duelling, what human arguments can avail. Of the religious principles

of poor Captain Melford I am totally ignorant, but dear Miss Brudenel seemed to be satisfied, and no one else had a right to question them."

Mr. Vincent replied,—"With Elizabeth, I believe, she has been perfectly open on the subject, and has sometimes lamented, that though her beloved friend possessed a heart alive to all the endearing charities of life; that a high sense of honour guided his every action, and that on the attributes of the Deity he would ever descant with reverence; he never dwelt on the subject of revelation, and once candidly confessed, she took great blame to herself, for not having more fully investigated the real sentiments of his mind. She also avowed that the fear of weakening the cause she meant to promote, by ill supported controversy, and the nameless fears which a truly attached heart ever experiences, to weary a beloved object by continued expostulation, lulled her into the fancied security, that when united to Melford by the sacred tie of marriage, her own example and undeviating practice of every Christian duty, should corroborate her professions of faith, and give force to the mildness of precept."

"This is not the hour," said Mr. Donavan, "to dwell on the irretrievably past, or to remind

the dear afflicted, that it borders on presumption to trust to future resolutions. The religion of a man, in the compact of marriage, is seldom considered, as 'the one thing most needful;' but what human felicity can be firmly poised when morality is founded on deism, when, if the truth of eternity be acknowledged, it is expected to be gained by man's exertions alone, and not hoped for, as the free gift of a redeeming God; and we may often observe, that the more earnest the parties are in their differing opinions, the more they are obnoxious to altercation, and to that dissimilarity of practice, which is the bane of happiness in the married life.

"It must however," said Mrs. Coventry, "afford much consolation to Miss Brudenel, to have received Captain Melford's journal after the momentous shipwreck, because it contained many serious sentiments, and avowed the firmest conviction, that such wonderful escapes, could only have been through the power and mercy of God. There are some confessions in it," returned Mr. Donavan, "that must be invaluable to her, and we can only hope that the Father of mercies will not be extreme to mark what is done amiss; a hope which even my sacred profession cannot condemn, however

prompt our exertions should be, to endeavour to lead men from the errors of self deception, to the credence of immortal truth."

"I believe," interrupted Mrs. Coventry, "I must reserve a question I wish to ask Mr. Donavan, till we are on our way to Beech Park. The carriage is now at the door, I trust we shall find the dear girl as well as possible, and that she will see us all, with some degree of resolution."

CHAPTER XXI.

Having detailed various incidental occurrences in the foregoing sheets, and narrated the progression of Willoughby's permanent reformation, it remains to add, that the lapse of a few years had improved the youthful trio in all that was praiseworthy, ornamental, and good. Lord Charles and Elizabeth had now attained their seventeenth year, and Ellinor was fourteen years of age. Miss Brudenel's grief for her afflicting loss, for the disappointment of all her long cherished hopes of happiness, reduced her to the brink of the grave; a dangerous illness brought on such symptoms of a rapid decline, that very little hope was entertained of her ultimate recovery. To the surprise and joy of her surrounding friends, health once more renovated her drooping frame; and at the end of two years, resignation, if not peace, revived a sincere interest in the felicity of those she loved, and in the passing scenes of domestic life. Willoughby hailed, with feelings of the purest de-

light, even the melancholy smile which gave something of a former expression to her features; and indulging himself in all the attentions of a brother and a friend, he embittered not the present moment by anticipations of the future. If at any time Donavan hinted that he might now be laying up a store of vain regrets, he would answer, "Not so, Donavan. So pure and hallowed is my regard for this interesting creature, that I should consider it almost sacrilege to wish her to regard me in any other light than as a truly attached friend. The reign of romantic passion has, on my part, long ceased; but the sentiment which now pervades my heart, 'leads up to Heaven—is both the way and guide:' nor could even my increasing regard disturb Miss Brudenel's heavenly temper of mind. Time must yet elapse, before I indulge one reasonable hope that her attachment to Melford's memory can in any degree be weakened. Have no fears for me, Donavan; I form no air-built fabrics, and trust my future fate to Heaven."

Lady Osborn's increasing enthusiasm, her total neglect of domestic duties, and her denunciations of even the blameless part of her hus-

band's conduct, had so completely wearied and disgusted him, that instead of advancing one step in the path of true religion, he seemed to glory in his own ignorance, and eventually ruined his health and temper by intemperate and boisterous revels: he was scarcely ever sober; and a separation between this ill-matched pair was about to take place.

But for Miss Brudenel's strength of mind, and "right understanding of all good things," she would often have been sorely distressed at her sister's remarks and opinions, who generally ended some harsh reprobation of Melford's conduct, by saying, "It was so ordained from the beginning that he should not be called to a state of salvation, but that he should yield to evil devices; and I consider you as a brand snatched from the fire of everlasting condemnation."

As Miss Brudenel was frequently an inmate at Beech Park, all means were taken to counteract such pernicious and unfeeling doctrine; and ever salutary and sweet were the sympathetic consolations she there received. How widely extended is the power of true religion! It can enlighten the darkest hour; assuage the deepest wounds of affliction; and without pronouncing that trials and disappointments are the

judgments of Heaven, can believe that they are awarded for some wise end, and that no human event is permitted unauthorized by an omniscient God.

Mr. Harcourt had continued his valuable friendship towards Willoughby, associating with him when in town, and corresponding when any particular or interesting event had occurred. Mr. Onslow's increasing infirmities had brought on the appearance of a very premature old age. The son and heir, on whom he doated, had always been an ailing, delicate child, but was removed from sickness and suffering; and, by his death, renewed all Mr. Onslow's unjust accusations of the decrees of Providence. A few months after the death of the child, Willoughby's newly-raised expectations, that the young Ellinor would at last enjoy her birth-right, were again disappointed, by Mrs. Onslow being in a situation to increase her family. The hope of another heir seemed to re-animate Mr. Onslow's spirits, though the medical opinion was, that he would most likely meet a sudden death, from symptoms of disease being accelerated by an indolent and sedentary life.

Mrs. Vincent had suffered the loss of two more children; and Elizabeth appeared every

day a greater treasure to her affectionate parents. No little anxiety was excited by the extreme delicacy of her appearance: the bloom on her cheek had faded, and her spirits did not seem to be the result of youthful gaiety, but occasionally forced, whenever Mrs. Vincent, with maternal solicitude, inquired if she felt any indisposition. Ellinor, whose health, and spirits, and gaiety, knew no abatement, excepting during the hours she had spent with Miss Brudenel in her late affliction, did not so accurately observe her cousin's changed appearance; but one morning, accompanying Mrs. Coventry to Beech Park, she somewhat surprised Elizabeth by entering hastily into the apartment where the morning studies were generally pursued. Books, and maps, and music, were apparently neglected for the employment of the pencil; and Elizabeth, in rather a confused manner, put away the implements for drawing.

"My sweet cousin," Ellinor said, "how pale you look to-day. I declare I never perceived such a triumph of the lily on your beauteous face. There now, dearest; could Charles have paid you a finer compliment?"

"Charles never pays me any compliment at all, my love; considering him as we do in the

light of a brother, compliments were quite out of character. But let us go down to dear grandmamma."

"Aye, and to dear Donny too, as you used to call him; yet stay, Elizabeth, I must tell you some news. What do you think? It is all settled. Charles is going to College with a friend of Mr. Donavan's, who is, I think, to be his tutor; but, first, all three are going a sort of a tour. Oh how dull we shall be when my playmate Charles has left us!"

"Dear Miss Brudenel will miss his kind intentions to amuse her."

"And to be sure, Elizabeth, *you* will not miss him. Here comes another part of my news:—I happened to be in the light closet yesterday, even with the back drawing-room, and I heard something of a conversation between papa and Mr. Donavan."

"How came you to listen, Ellinor? It was dishonourable."

"Whilst I was debating whether to remain, or to go through the room to them, and sometimes settling, it could not be dishonourable to stay, because my being so near was a chance circumstance—papa said, 'I do think Charles evidently prefers Elizabeth; but both are so

young.' Then Donny interrupted—'Their juvenile partiality will necessarily be tried by time and absence.' And then he praised you up to the skies, and declared, that to witness Charles's possession of such a treasure, (meaning you, mind,) would prove to him a source even of happiness."

The suffusion on Elizabeth's cheek now became so painful, that Ellinor remarked her confusion, and added, "Come, I know now what will restore your bloom. To be sure, I am but a child in comparison of you; but I suppose dear Charles and you will soon be in love with one another; and when you are married, how I shall like to stay weeks at a time with you!"

"Nonsense, Ellinor; you are running on strangely this morning."

"I know what I say. Heigho! How could I think—— Dear, what was I going to add?"

To all Elizabeth's interrogatories she only answered, "Nonsense, as you say. Well, I shall not cry again, because dear Charles talks so differently to us. With you, he converses; with me, he plays, and jokes, and trifles, as he should do with such a little girl; for though I am fourteen, you know I am often taken for twelve. How droll it will be to see you and

Charles as lovers!" She then burst into a fit of laughter, which was immediately succeeded by a violent flood of tears.

There are moments when the human mind is so softened or weakened by present circumstances or future anticipations, that reason is at variance with consistency, and irrepressible feelings of tenderness agitate "the gay, the grave, the lively, or severe."

The cousins rushed into each other's arms; and after the dearest epithets, found it necessary to make their appearance to the party below; Ellinor requesting, as a particular favour, Elizabeth would not give the slightest hint of what had just passed, and Elizabeth counselling her never to endeavour to reconcile to her conscience the meanness of listening. "No never, Elizabeth, again, as long as I live; yet I cannot heartily repent this once having done so, because——"

Here they reached the room door; and Elizabeth was told by all of the great improvement in her looks—the traces of agitation not having yet left her glowing cheek.

CHAPTER XXII.

The tender regrets of all were keenly aroused to part with Lord Charles; his adieus partook of the nature of filial and brotherly affection, and when he and Mr. Donavan had really departed, the link in the social compact seemed mournfully broken. Ellinor soon recovered her sportive gaiety, and Elizabeth spent much of her time with Miss Brudenel, every allowance being made for her wish of seclusion, both on account of her delicate health and of parting from a companion she had associated with, as the most affectionate of brothers. No doubt was entertained that so endearing a sentiment would at some future day ripen into a mutual attachment. The hints she had received from her cousin, and the emotion Charles himself had evinced at the parting, induced her really to think what were the wishes of her friends. Young as she was, to indulge romantic ideas, or to set up her own judgment as the standard of right and wrong, never actuated her feelings or her conduct. She determined to regain her accustomed

interest in every daily avocation and useful pursuit, and to all, but to the eye of maternal solicitude, she seemed to have regained her usual tranquillity.

Mr. Donavan had frequently called "thoughts to counsel," to determine whether he would give up his clerical duty to a curate, and accompany Charles to Oxford himself; but he could not bring his conscience to consent that he should abandon his parish to the care of another for more than a few weeks at a time, some peculiar cases and circumstances requiring his immediate care. It was Charles's own wish to go to Oxford, and he had almost gained Mr. Donavan's promise to accompany him, when it was deemed proper for him to travel

At the end of six months Charles brought with him a "little holiday,"—the parsonage, the cottage, and Beech Park, happy in the true spirit of rejoicing, as a parent, a brother, and a friend, to receive him. Ellinor had been wild with joy, in the anticipation of his arrival. Elizabeth, with a degree of unaccountable seriousness, looked forward to the meeting. The space of six months had made so wonderful an alteration in Ellinor (for she was nearly as tall as Elizabeth), that Charles held her back with one

hand in surprise, and half sportively declared, he "must not now presume to treat her as a little girl." Willoughby had observed with all the fondness of a parent, the perfection which her form and figure were acquiring, and the likeness both to himself and her mother, could not fail of interesting his tenderest feelings; and the chance of her inheriting Mr. Onslow's vast possessions, (depending on the birth of another son,) and which was on the eve of being determined, sometimes agitated his mind more than he chose to acknowledge. In his conduct towards Miss Brudenel, the delicacy of every brotherly attention only could be discerned; he often termed her his second sister, and soothed her still wounded mind by the most friendly counsel and zealous consideration of all her wishes. Miss Brudenel was some years younger than Mrs. Vincent, and though the latter retained her beauty and her form almost equal to Elizabeth's (they often having been taken for sisters), Miss Brudenel might have disputed with either the palm of youth and beauty, and was in Willoughby's opinion, one of the most interesting of human beings.

Without exactly intending it, there was a sort of tacit acknowledgment even in the manner of

casual observers, that Lord Charles and Elizabeth were intended for one another; Ellinor had so completely made up her mind to the ultimate event, that Elizabeth was sometimes compelled to check her volatile remarks, or more serious questions on the subject. When Lord Charles went to Oxford, Ellinor wept for a few hours, then regained her usual spirits; whilst Elizabeth's appeared to be more than commonly oppressed for weeks after his departure.

Mrs. Vincent surprising her one day in tears, tenderly enquired the reason of her depression; the vague answers of—"nothing particular,"—"not feeling quite well," &c.—did not satisfy the anxiety of a mother. Mrs. Vincent was no friend to idle communications, or to a forced romantic confidence, but she knew the mind she herself had formed, and that Elizabeth had hitherto been perfectly open on all subjects to her, both as a mother and a friend. At length Elizabeth said—"I really do not feel well, my dearest mamma, and perhaps I am too much agitated by certain reports in regard to Lord Charles. I certainly love him as a brother, but I never wish to marry—I never wish to leave you."

"I thought you had more sense, my love, than

to be moved by idle reports: Lord Charles is very young, yet should he at some future day continue to regard you with partiality, need I say, a more desirable match could not be thought of, nor one that would afford your father, myself, and Mr. Donavan, such heartfelt satisfaction. Formed by our deservedly esteemed Mr. Donavan, to all that is good and great——"

"Oh, my dear mamma," she interrupted, "I well know the truth of what you say, but I hope never to marry."

Mrs. Vincent remembering her own expostulations on the subject with Mrs. Coventry, eighteen years back, could scarcely suppress a smile, when she said,—

"Your happiness, dearest girl, is the first wish of both your parents' hearts,"—then narrating the little scene we have just alluded to, she continued,—"Our cases, my love, were however different; the gentleman who first offered to me was a man of the world, and though I might have been led to regard him, his want of a proper sense of religion was an insuperable obstacle; and I declare to you, Elizabeth, at that time, your beloved father was only regarded by me as a well-tried friend to our family. The knowledge of his intrinsic worth, and his

affection for me, which had stood the test of all my adverse hours, ripened my esteem into the purest affection,—and I leave you to determine whether our union has proved a happy one."

"So happy, dearest mamma, that it falls to the lot of few, to meet with such a being as my beloved father."

"And yet you see, Elizabeth, I did not fall romantically in love; but convinced by your grandmother of some erroneous opinions, I glory to tell you, I have never had one dissenting hour with your father.—Cheer up, Elizabeth, and if at some future day, you can give good reasons for disliking Lord Charles, he shall never have the mortification of being refused."

"Oh, mamma! tell Mr. Donavan so now; I would fain not be inconsistent nor undutiful,—but indeed I never wish to marry, and leave my beloved village and home—"

Mrs. Vincent was distressingly puzzled to unravel the cause of Elizabeth's strange and unusual caprice, but soon her fond anxiety was more severely tried,—a dangerous fever confined her beloved girl to the bed of sickness and of suffering; and in a paroxysm of delirium, whilst her mourning relatives and friends were watching around her couch, Mr. Donavan en-

deavouring to comfort the almost despairing parents;—Elizabeth raved of recent events, and of the conversation which had passed between her and Mrs. Vincent; and then starting up in all the inconsistency of a frenzied mind, seized her father's hand, saying—" I am dying, and I will speak of him."

Indulging her with the tender enquiry—" of whom are you speaking?"—She frantically exclaimed—" Dear Donavan, come and save me, I could not tell mamma, but in heaven, and before angels, I shall soon say how I have loved you; though you do wish me to marry Lord Charles."

Exhausted by similar ravings, she soon sunk on her pillow in quiet and alarming exhaustion, and whilst all necessary restoratives were administering, Donavan wept like a child. For many days her continued delirium excluded Mr. Donavan from the trying scene; and a new turn was given to his feelings, by the receipt of two letters from Lord Charles at Oxford.

One was meant for his two sisters, as he always called Elizabeth and Ellinor; the other for Mr. Donavan: but by mistake each letter was wrongly directed. That which Mr. Donavan received, was simply an account of a beautiful Indian bird which he had promised to procure

for the girls, and which he said was now on the road to them, gaily adding—" to be gallant, I should say, how I envy the little prisoner, because led to such pleasing bondage; with a hundred other airy compliments, which contain more nonsense than sincerity. But the very few opportunities I am allowed to write to my dear sister Elizabeth, and to my lately grown up, sweet companion, my ci-devant playmate, Ellinor, will not permit me to waste the present valued privilege in displeasing them by complimentary nonsense. I hope you all miss me very much,—I am already anticipating the happiness of our next social meeting."—And then, as he expresses it, " lingering to say adieu," he concludes, with the signature of their affectionate brother and friend.

The other letter, which Mr. Donavan should have had, being directed to Miss Vincent, was opened by her mother; but on reading the first three lines, and guessing the mistake, she put it into Mr. Donavan's hands. After mentioning his arrival at Oxford, and various matters of business, Lord Charles thus proceeds:—

" To you, my more than father, I must ever disclose the inmost feelings of my heart; and premature as the subject may appear on which

I am about to touch, I am, from a variety of circumstances, impelled to discuss it with sincerity and truth. It is in vain to deny, that young as we both are, Elizabeth is considered by many, as my destined wife: the badinage which began in our childhood, seems imperceptibly to have increased to somewhat of a more serious character. I scarcely know how to express or to define my feelings, for I love the dear girl with all the affection of a brother; and yet I am persuaded, that at no future time could I feel for her that peculiar preference which as her accepted lover I ought then proudly to boast of. Boy as I yet am, I have not the vanity to suppose she gives credit to unfounded and vague reports of our future union, or that she feels more interest for my welfare than as an attached and affectionate sister;—but let not time sanction what our hearts do not respond to. When I contemplate her loveliness—see her the charm of our domestic circle, and the blessing of all to whom she can extend relief—when I observe her mild and unobtrusive virtues, and know that strong sense and accurate judgment are united to a truly feminine mind, I should indeed be surprised at my own insensibility if I did not feel, that the cause could only originate in my

exclusive preference of another!—Oh, my best and kindest friend, let me confide to you, that even from her infant years, Ellinor Coventry has been the darling of my heart:—I yet remember her first lisping accents, and all the little caprices incidental to a petted child,—I have witnessed her daily and growing improvements,—her generous avowal of hasty or casual error; and I have felt, deeply felt, her very recent increase of mental acquirements, and marked the growing promise of the perfection of female beauty. You have perhaps taught me to think beyond my age, and I am well aware years must pass, before I dare disclose to Ellinor the feelings of my heart. That she has not of late been considered the heiress of Mr. Onslow's fortune, is one source of consolation, for I would in truth be exonerated from all mercenary motives; and I earnestly hope there will yet be an obstacle to her claim of inheritance. Your candid statement of all my possessions and estates renders any increase of them superfluous and unnecessary;—and never, no, never can I be sufficiently grateful for your wise and excellent stewardship; and above all, for your care and protection in my infant days,—for your instruction and guardianship to the hour of our parting.—Oh, that

parting!—how bitter still is the trial; and I vainly look to my present estimable companion for the dear friend of former happy days. But I am wandering!—I never know how to check my pen when addressing you; and, what you will think and say of this letter, must agitate my feelings till I have the happiness to behold your welcome hand-writing.—You will probably consider I am only actuated by boyish sentiments, and that an intercourse with the world will cause me to repent such juvenile confessions. It cannot be disputed that this has often been the case; but Ellinor Coventry will ever be the chosen of my heart and affections!—for my partiality has indeed 'grown with my growth, and strengthened with my strength.'"

Charles then concludes his letter with endeavouring to touch on the subject of literature, and his plans of progressive study, leaving Mr. Donavan in a state of mind almost indefinable to himself; nor till he had taken time for reflection, did he venture to answer the extraordinary letter before him. He promptly communicated the contents to Willoughby and Mrs. Coventry, who blest the lucky chance that had prevented the young Ellinor from receiving such premature confessions of a boy's attach-

ment. Mr. and Mrs. Vincent pondered over the letter in silence; for whilst their darling child's existence seemed to be suspended between life and death, every future worldly event appeared of little interest. When Mr. Donavan talked over the subject with Willoughby, they both agreed to let all things take their course,—that Charles's present boyish and romantic attachment to Ellinor would probably fade away, as other juvenile prepossessions had done; that in maturer years the inclinations of either should ever remain unbiassed; and Willoughby added, it was not impossible but that Elizabeth might again rival her more laughter-loving cousin.—"Let us await in patience," Donavan replied: "should Elizabeth's life be spared to her sorrowing friends, the destiny of both our dear girls will, I trust, be propitious to their happiness, for never were there children of fairer promise than those which so engage our affectionate interest. I confess, I have hitherto always imagined that Elizabeth was Charles's preferred companion; but rest assured, Willoughby, that his choice shall be mine."

"How strange were the wanderings of the dear invalid's imagination!—and there seemed to be so much 'method in her delirium,' that I

cannot help feeling consoled at the idea, that my girl will not unconsciously wound the feelings of her cousin."

"Why surely, surely, Willoughby, you cannot mean to allude to the incoherent ravings of a frightful delirium,—ridiculous for one moment to imagine, that the youthful graces of seventeen could, in the hour of health and convalescence, prefer a man of my years and habits to the more splendid attractions that await her?"

"May she be restored to us all, Donavan;—for what a trial are her parents now enduring!"

"Amen, to that aspiration!—And what a lesson should the scenes we have have witnessed enforce on our minds. So young—so lovely,—so everything, that the fondest relatives can wish or anticipate for a child's welfare and happiness!—Oh, Willoughby, were there not an expectation to comfort 'those that mourn,' what a dreary waste would this world appear to every son and daughter of affliction!—seventeen years of tender interest, to wind around the human heart all the affectionate sympathies of our nature, and then to consign a cherished being to the silent grave, is indeed a trial of fortitude to every bereaved and wretched parent!—It is true, we often pray in ignorance for what we imagine will

promote our happiness; but that Being, who 'knoweth whereof we are made,' will not condemn the supplication of an afflicted mind,—if we ask in all due humility for a restoration of its dearest blessings. I well know the heart and principles of this dear and suffering girl; and should she now be raised from earth to heaven, who will deny that survivors are the only sufferers!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

The blessing of Heaven, with every human means of medical skill, and the kind watchings of parental care and anxiety, at length restored Elizabeth to progressive health and animation.

One morning, after a visit from her rejoicing cousin, Mrs. Vincent expressed a fear, that Ellinor's lively spirits had fatigued her. "No, my dear Mamma," she replied, "not her delightful spirits, but her returning raillery about Lord Charles, and what a comfort it would prove to me, to be assured, that at no future time——" (here her voice faltered, and she burst into tears.) "Then," replied Mrs. Vincent, "be assured, my dearest girl, that at no future time shall you ever be advised against your inclination."

"Ten thousand thanks for this assurance: Oh, if you could know my heart,—but I cannot longer conceal the reason of my having imagined dear Charles was considered as my future husband."

Elizabeth, then detailed the little scene which

had passed betwixt Ellinor and herself, resulting from Mr. Donavan's and Willoughby's conference, having been listened to by her cousin, and avowed, that only from a mutual promise of secrecy, she had been induced to have one concealment from such a mother; that she now considered the promise a very childish one, and she trusted, from her uncle's and Mr. Donavan's conversation on the subject, she herself should be exonerated, from an unwarrantable vanity, or converting every idle or chance report to a confirmation of her future destiny. "You, and you only," she continued, "my dearest Mamma, can undeceive Mr. Donavan and my uncle. If ever I should marry, it must be to a man of more age and experience than myself, to whom I could look up to for instruction, and whose example would keep me steady in the only path of happiness; but till I meet with a man as good as my father is, may I never leave this dear house."

"I trust and hope there are many such characters to be met with; and, dear Elizabeth, do not unnecessarily agitate yourself; your happiness can be our only aim, for though bitter is the trial to part with a beloved child, even with the fairest prospects before her, I humbly pray, no

selfishness, on either side, will contribute to influence any future decision you may be called upon to pronounce."

"Strangely has this subject been led to, by one, whose existence was lately balanced on so slight a tenure; but, indeed, mamma, my heart is hourly lifted up to that omnipotent power, who was about my bed in the hour of suffering, and has raised me to health and peace, to live, I hope, to be a comfort to you, and all we love. Neither can I repent the communication I have made, in regard to Ellinor's thoughtless conduct, because with you it is sacred, and because your assurances have made me happy."

"I cannot, however, help thinking it strange, Elizabeth, that you should so decidedly determine, that our inestimable Charles must always be regarded by you with indifference."

"Indifference! no, dear Mamma, not so; I never had a brother of his age, but I sum up my affection for him, by acknowledging I love him, as I suppose I should have loved a brother: besides, my ambition is ever to live in a country village; I am not formed for the dissipated scenes of life, and whoever marries Lord Charles, must do honour to his rank and title. I am not romantic enough to avow, that love

and a cottage without a moderate competence, can ensure domestic happiness; but this I know, a 'coach and six' is not my ambition; and that I prefer a ramble on our delightful hills, to the pent-up slavery of fashionable airings. You may smile, mamma, but in this village and the next, are comprized my ideas of felicity."

"I think, after all, Elizabeth, you must be a clergyman's wife."

At this instant, Elizabeth fancied some defect in a string of her harp, and quickly turning round, and bending over the instrument, she endeavoured to conceal the heightened colour on her cheek, which, however, did not escape Mrs. Vincent's observation; and some artless expressions of Elizabeth's, and the delicate outline she unconsciously drew of rural felicity, with a companion who could appreciate and share the rational and simple enjoyments of life, more and more confirmed her suspicions of Elizabeth's growing attachment to Mr. Donavan, and that all she had incoherently uttered on the bed of sickness, had more foundation, than as proceeding from a common delirium.

When conversing with Mr. Vincent on the subject, both, with one voice, delared, that if Mr. Donavan were a few years younger, they

knew not a being to whom they would so willingly entrust the happiness of their child:—"but," continued Mr. Vincent, "we have a delicate part to act; if Donavan has not a heart to bestow, our Elizabeth must not daily witness the excellence and superiority of his character; accustomed as she has been, even from her infant years, to consider him as the first of human beings, to witness the most exemplary actions; and, distinguished as he is, by every outward grace and accomplishment, which mark the scholar and the gentlemen, I am more grieved than surprized, that our dear recluse, in all the romance of seventeen, should have thought of love and a cottage, and Donavan together. I only say grieved, because of the disparity of years, and because his affections may still be buried in the grave with his Matilda.

"Something decisive must be determined on.

"I will, my best love, speak confidentially to your brother; Donavan is not yet on the wrong side of forty, and certainly looks much younger; it is ridiculous to talk of the beauty of a man, but so pleasing an exterior, and so peculiarly melodious a voice, I hardly ever met with. In the pulpit,—in the private conference,—in the

domestic circle, how fascinating are his powers to persuade, to reason, and to charm. A girl of modern, or rather of fashionable education, would doubtless prefer the rank and title which Lord Charles could bestow; but our Elizabeth has different ideas, and has imbibed every feminine and domestic virtue, from the example of her inestimable mother."

From ceasing to think it was impossible that Elizabeth could prefer a man older than herself, to the young and attractive Lord Linden, Donavan pondered on the probability of her prepossession in his favour; he could not contemplate her lovely countenance, nor daily witness the perfections of her mind, with that stoical indifference, which he had so long considered inseparable from his character; and the newly assumed timidity of Elizabeth's manner, when he essayed to address her on the common subjects of the day, the frequent blush, the faltering accent, or the tremor of her frame;—he could not, under all existing circumstances, solely attribute to the late severe trial of her nervous system.

It may be remembered she was concealing a drawing in her portfolio, on the morning of her conference with Ellinor, previously to the fever which attacked her, and the now beautifully

finished miniature, either by Ellinor's curiosity, or some unintended mistake, fell into the hands of the lively girl; and thinking no more of shewing the likeness to Mr. Donavan, than she would had she met with her father, in all the naïvete of fourteen, she bounded into the garden where he was sitting, deep in mental reflections, (having just had an interesting conference with Willoughby,) and holding the miniature at a distance, exclaimed, "see what I have found, I have requested my cousin an hundred times to let me sit for my picture, and here is your's, beautifully finished, when I dare say you never thought of asking her; oh, it is sweetly painted! Papa's is not half so like." Donavan, taken by surprise, endeavoured to conceal his feelings by some appropriate badinage, and at length succeeded in taking the miniature out of Ellinor's hand. He immediately returned home, and determined on a due investigation of the contrariety of the emotions he experienced; that a creature he had nursed in her infancy, and from early childhood had progressively been her playmate, her instructor, her counsellor;—that one so eminently gifted by nature, with a mind cultivated by all that education could achieve;

should look upon him with peculiar regard, was a conviction, however, he could not yet allow of.

The miniature caught his eye,—"Pshaw!" he continued, "might not her father's or her uncle's resemblance have been equally pourtrayed! Oh, could Matilda's angelic spirit witness my heart's emotions, would she not say, 'let the purity of such youthful attachment console thee for my loss, and Heaven at last shall prove the resting place of all.'" His mind and feelings were so highly wrought, that it required some efforts of resolution, to temper the enthusiasm of the moment, and to subdue the germ of vanity which was rising in his bosom, at the probability of the lovely Elizabeth's preference.

Mrs. Coventry, confined with a bad cold, fortunately prevented Ellinor acquainting her cousin with the destination of the miniature; and Elizabeth, as the families did not meet for a day or two, neither missed her treasure, nor suspected her loss. Ellinor gave many hints of wishing to drive to Beech Park; but her grandmother's indisposition rather increasing, she ceased to urge her wishes; and to amuse Mrs. Coventry, and to indulge herself in telling, what she thought, a shrewd concealment of Eliza-

beth's; her finding the miniature, and Mr. Donavan's retaining it, was playfully narrated to her grandmother.

Willoughby at this instant entered the room with an opened letter in his hand, and before Mrs. Coventry could utter a sentence, he gave it to her to peruse. The account was from Mr. Harcourt, dated Onslow Park, stating the sudden decease of Mr. Onslow, and the contents of the letter may be thus briefly comprized.—

Mr. Onslow had been alarmingly ill for some days; and the agitation he had experienced during his wife's sufferings, lest he should be disappointed of his hopes of an heir; and the disappointment which eventually occurred by the birth of a girl, was productive of such violent emotions, that even in the midst of unhallowed accusations of the decrees of Providence, he fell senseless from his chair, and in a few minutes expired.

Mr. Harcourt advised Willoughby to lose no time in reaching Onslow Park;—that his own Ellinor was consequently the undoubted heiress of her grandfather's personal and real estates;—that he never had been prevailed on to make a will, and therefore all must descend to the next rightful inheritor;—that notwithstanding

Mrs. Onslow's situation, her indecent reproaches to her husband's memory were dreadful to listen to, as she at the same time avowed, she had only married age and infirmity to secure to herself the luxuries of life, and was hourly seeking to quarrel with her aunt, the housekeeper, for persuading her to become his wife.

Willoughby then said,—"I will not lose an instant, my dear mother, in beginning the journey; poor Harcourt must be anxious to see me." Then, turning to Ellinor, he added,—

"These are strange turns of fortune, my love, and you are old enough to be entrusted with the knowledge, that you are now the heiress of your grandfather's estates; but bitterly shall I lament your possession of riches, if they render you less humble, or less attentive to your Christian duties. I leave you in such good hands, that I trust you will hear and profit by all the counsel of that dear maternal friend."

Ellinor threw herself into her father's arms, and endeavouring to suppress her emotions, she said,—

"I am so happy to be rich."

"Ellinor," Willoughby rather sternly exclaimed.

"Yes, papa, I am so happy to be rich; you know I cannot grieve for poor grandpapa, be-

cause I never saw him, but my joy proceeds from having the power of making dearest grandmama both independent and rich. She shall have a beautiful carriage and every thing she wishes for, and you, my own dear papa, shall have all my fortune, and only give me what you think proper, and then you know you need not fatigue yourself with business, nor leave Miss Brudenel and poor Ellinor to mourn your occasional absence in town."

Willoughby gazed at his child in silence, and taking an affectionate leave of his differently agitated companions, he was soon on the road to Somersetshire. Mr. Donavan had accompanied him the first stage of the journey, and it may well be imagined that the discussion of present and future plans, did not render the conference an uninteresting one. Before Willoughby's return, Mr. Donavan was sufficiently convinced that the touching expressions, which had escaped Elizabeth in the hour of delirium, had in them both method and meaning, and a chance occurrence expedited the avowal of his sentiments.

Mrs. Coventry had desired Ellinor not to tell her cousin how childishly she had parted with the miniature. She herself having ap-

prized Mrs. Vincent of the circumstance, and both deeming it more decorous that Elizabeth should not know of its destination. It was not in nature to be unmoved as he held the hand of each lovely cousin, but he could not help thinking Elizabeth was more than usually composed that morning, till re-assured by a whisper from Ellinor, that the careless girl had not missed the treasure, and that she herself had kept the secret of his rude behaviour in forcibly taking the miniature from her. In the course of their drive to Beech Park, Ellinor said, "What a pity it is not to walk through that beautiful field and grove this lovely morning." "I really wish to leave a letter at yonder cottage," Mr. Donavan replied,—"and if you will allow our young friends to accompany me, I think the air may prove beneficial to Miss Vincent."

The term "Miss Vincent," so unusually formal, excited a painful feeling in her bosom, and Ellinor turning quickly round, said, "Miss Vincent indeed, one would suppose your own dear pupil had become an heiress all of a sudden, instead of my unworthy self," and bounded out of the carriage; Donavan offered his arm to both, and all were as cheerful as existing circumstances would permit.

The shooting season had commenced, and much comment and observation ensued on the savage sport, as Ellinor emphatically termed it. Lord Charles was the next topic of conversation. Donavan spoke of him in the highest terms;—"Oh, how I do wish the next vacation would come," cried Ellinor, "Charles is so entertaining;" "And have not you another word to add in his favour," said Donavan turning to Elizabeth.

"When I say," she replied, "I love him as a brother, it must be unnecessary to add any thing more."

"Ay, I must not repeat what I once thought, Elizabeth," cried Ellinor; Donavan checked her, and turned the discourse. He kindly feared Elizabeth felt fatigued, and urged her to lean more on him for support, and she fancied she felt the friendly pressure of his arm. Elizabeth was silent, but not from fatigue; she was too happy to talk, and once, she indulged herself with the thought, that she was enjoying the society of the only being who could ever be interesting to her; that now she had explained her repugnance to Lord Charles's future attentions, she wished nothing more than to see Mr.

Donavan every day, and to be called by the endearing name of Elizabeth.

Some voices were now heard in no distant direction, and the report of a gun proclaimed that sportsmen were near. The place in which they were passing was partially enclosed, and scarcely had the compassionate exclamation, "oh, the poor birds," passed the lips of Mr. Donavan's companions, when they perceived him levelled to the ground. Screams and lamentations aroused his scattered senses, but Elizabeth having ever been taught that exertion, not helplessness was requisite in the hour of trial, supported his head, and endeavoured to bind up the wound which had lacerated his shoulder, by tearing her handkerchief and part of her apparel for the purpose. Who shall endeavour to describe her feelings, when the miniature she had painted of him dropped from his pocket-book, which his fall had thrown on the ground? and seeing him again becoming faint and insensible, she exclaimed,—"oh, heaven, in mercy spare him! my dear, beloved friend, look up once more, oh! heaven, in mercy spare him!"

He had just recollection enough to hear her affecting words, and again recovering, he en-

deavoured to suggest a possibility of procuring assistance. The unconscious authors of the accident had taken a different direction, and from them no help could be expected. Donavan faintly urged that Ellinor should take the path he pointed out, which would bring her in view of Beech Park, and that Elizabeth should remain with him in case the faintness from loss of blood should again overpower his senses.

Ellinor obeyed the directions of Mr. Donavan, and in as short a time as possible, every arrangement was forwarded for his removal. Elizabeth watched him in silence during the interval, but the feelings of both were unequivocally depicted in their countenance.

The Vincents insisted that Donavan should be carried to Beech Park, rightly determining that he could be better taken care of than at his solitary parsonage; medical aid was instantly resorted to, and good nursing and kind attentions were in a few days rewarded by his being pronounced out of danger; the wound, though painful, wore a better appearance, fever had subsided, and he was permitted to thank the anxious companions of his danger for their solicitude and presence of mind when he could not help himself. He gently whispered Eliza-

beth, " say not, dearest girl, I have been in a dream, how little can the devotion of my whole life repay your kindness and regard."

" Heaven be praised you are so mercifully preserved," she replied, and fearing her emotion would overcome her resolution, she left the room with her mother.

On that dear mother's bosom she had poured forth all her heart, and that she was beloved by Mr. Donavan every recent circumstance combined to assure her. In answer to some recurrence, Mrs. Vincent had made to his former heart-felt disappointment, Elizabeth said, " I know, mamma, many more romantic heads, and less attached hearts than mine, would object to our dear friend, on account of the disparity of years, and his having been once so seriously attached. Now, I think his friendship alone is worth a thousand common loves, and should he when entirely recovered from the effects of the accident,—should he declare to you and my father his growing partiality for me,"—she hesitated, " and what then, Elizabeth?" " Why then, dear mamma, your will shall be mine, with this proviso, that if you and papa object to Mr. Donavan's proposals, I may be allowed to live single all my life."

" Let us remember, Elizabeth, that Mr. Donavan has not given you reason to suppose his sentiments partake of more than gratitude for your late endearing services."

" Mamma, I have treasured some declarations in my heart, which such a man as Mr. Donavan would not lightly utter; but of this be assured, you shall never blush for your Elizabeth's want of fortitude, if I have vainly deceived myself."

CHAPTER XXIV.

When Mr. Donavan became convalescent, as he was on the point of returning to the parsonage, he sought a conference with Mr. Vincent, and honestly avowed he should never have risked the chance of being called presumptuous, had not some peculiar circumstances flattered him with the hope of Elizabeth's partiality; that since he had ceased to consider her as the destined wife of Lord Charles, the revolution of his own feelings was not to be defined; that he was well aware Elizabeth's youth and beauty entitled her to expect more brilliant prospects; but that a prompt decision on the momentous subject was what he had reason to expect from so long esteemed a friend.

Mr. Vincent, somewhat prepared for this declaration, answered him in the most candid and honourable manner; nor did many hours elapse before he had an interview with Elizabeth, and drew from her every artless confession of her long-concealed regard, and her happiness to be now termed "his own Elizabeth."

Lord Charles, who had heard with great inquietude of Mr. Donavan's accident, at last gained leave of absence for a few days; and had just arrived at the parsonage, as Mr. Vincent's carriage drove up to the door with his now recovered friend.

When they were left tête-à-tête, great was Charles's surprise to be informed of the late occurrences; and he returned to Oxford more in love than ever with Ellinor Coventry, having tenaciously adhered to his former assertion, that no time nor circumstances could alter his affections. He made neither comment nor observation on the change that would take place at the parsonage, excepting, "How happy the woman, whose life is to be passed in this little paradise with a companion like yourself!"

Miss Brudenel was staying at Beech Park during the period of Mr. Donavan's accident, and had joined in all the little offices and attentions which feminine delicacy so pleasingly can offer; and when he had departed, and all things were resuming their usual course, she was surprised to find how much she missed Willoughby's society. He had of late claimed the privilege of being considered her friend, consulted her on a variety of occasions, and sympathized

in all her inquietudes in regard to her deluded sister; and as her grief for the fate of the dear departed seemed to be mellowed into that species of tender remembrance which could bear to hear his name mentioned, and his virtues enumerated, conversation often unconsciously led to the interesting subject, and she listened to Willoughby's consolatory arguments with gratitude and esteem.

Another year passed on: Elizabeth had become the wife of Donavan. The most implicit confidence between all parties gave every promise that time would only more firmly cement the sacredness of that family union which had rendered Donavan one of its happy members. Every thing had been properly arranged to put Ellinor in possession of her grandfather's wealth and estates; and Lord Charles, in all the ardour of a first attachment, still lamented her being so distinguished an heiress, as he ever continued to repeat, he loved her for herself alone; and as Ellinor increased in years and experience, there appeared to be no obstacle to prevent their eventual union.

The young man who had met poor Melford in the field, died a martyr to remorse and disease, brought on by an accusing conscience.

Mr. Vincent, when he received the account of his death, immediately visited the afflicted family; and with a heart as liberal as his means, destroyed all bonds of pecuniary import between himself and his friend, and provided for several children of these unfortunate parents; for heavy losses had fatally reduced their once handsome income.

By one of those unlooked for and unexpected transitions of fortune, the kind hearted Mrs. Matthews was also bereaved of the luxuries, and nearly the comforts of life; and in the unabated humility of her heart, she wrote to Mrs. Vincent, to request her recommendation of the little girl, who was once her favourite pupil, to some eligible situation; likewise stating her other daughter had married imprudently, and was gone abroad with her husband; that the little boy, whose spirit she had sometimes conquered, was grown a fine young man, though she, as his mother, should not boast of it—and that, but for his kind behaviour and affectionate attentions, life would be insupportable—but that he had been too unfortunate in the line of life he had chosen, to place a mother and sister above dependence; that she was sorry to add, poor dear Mr. Matthews was dead—and, alas!

the provision which she once thought was secured to her and her children, had been squandered away—for, poor dear man, he had died with the cards in his hand.

Mrs. Vincent, though she recognized a little of Mrs. Matthews's style in the above communication, was pleased to believe that the beautiful hand-writing was the assistance of her daughter; and she immediately resolved to consult with Mrs. Coventry on the subject, and, that if Miss Matthews's accomplishments of head and heart could fit her for the situation, to propose her as an inmate of Mrs. Coventry's house, that Ellinor might enjoy the advantage of a suitable companion, and that both might continue to excel under the most able and approved masters.

Willoughby was delighted with the scheme; for though he now began to hope that Miss Brudenel would not reject his suit, and that the happiness of a married life would yet be his lot, he perceived the cruelty of the proposal to divide Mrs. Coventry from Ellinor; and suffice it to say, that Mrs. Vincent, ever prompt in her benevolent intentions, answered the letter in question, and appointed a time when she would call on Mrs. Matthews in town; that the meet-

ing was gratifying to both, and that the now blooming and modest-looking girl highly interested Mrs. Vincent. She invited both mother and daughter to Beech Park, and, in due time, Miss Matthews became Mrs. Coventry's guest; nor did one regret ever arise that benevolence had sheltered so elegant, so good, and so accomplished a young woman.

Mr. Vincent was much pleased with her brother; and the law being his profession, Willoughby took him by the hand, and in due time he became a confidential partner; for though such abundant wealth had poured into his family, he would not relinquish his profession, more and more convinced that useful employment was the duty of every created being, and that idleness promoted visionary ills, and led to real evils. Young Matthews could not help having seen so much of his father's blameable conduct, that it had induced a train of thought beyond his years; the suddenness of his death had given him an unconquerable abhorrence of the vice of gaming; and his excellent conduct towards his mother and sister, had contributed to soften the bitterness of adverse fortune. In the zenith of prosperity no expense had been spared in the education of Miss Matthews; and

much of her time, when she grew up, was passed in the society of her godmother, whose habits and education were calculated to have the happiest influence on her young companion. Hence the youthful heiress derived incalculable benefit from such a companion, and their friendship ended but with life.

Willoughby never forgot Dame Aubrey, having liberally contributed by an annual allowance to procure her all the necessary comforts of life: he had recently heard of her death, and he ever kept the promise he had made in the early day of their acquaintance, to provide, according to her station, for the child whose life he had preserved.

Lady Osborn was not yet prevailed upon to "adorn the doctrines" she professed, by the practice of consistent and feminine virtues. She continued to talk of being in the right road, of having found the path of happiness; but her harsh judgment of others, her unconciliating manners, her total neglect of her own person, excited the general feelings of disgust or pity. After she was left a widow, (for Sir James had met with a premature death in being thrown from his horse when following the hounds,) she became yet more eccentric and ridiculous in her

conduct; and, to the ear of genuine and unaffected piety, it was discordant to listen to her almost impious assertions, that the fatal accident which had deprived her husband of life, was a judgment from Heaven; that the evil one had tempted him on to ruin; and that, had he lived a hundred years, he never would have been called out of his state of darkness: it being ordained, "that only a certain number should receive the blessing of grace and election."

Conversing on the lamentable occurrence, and sympathizing with Miss Brudenel on her sister's really uncharitable conduct, Willoughby had flattered himself that he could often soothe her mind to peace; and dwelling on some trivial circumstances which had excited her anxiety on his own account, he determined to know how far he might hope for a nearer and tenderer interest in her regard, he therefore wrote to her as follows:—

"TO MISS BRUDENEL.

"I claim the privilege of friendship, my dear Miss Brudenel, to request your indulgent attention on a subject highly interesting to my future peace of mind. When in your valued society, often have the words died on my lips

which would have been the dictates of a sincerely attached heart. I have found it impossible to tell you, you are dearer to me than existence; and if this candid assertion prepare you for a still bolder confession, let me entreat you not to damp my presumptuous hopes by a cold or decided repulse.

"Even in your happiest days I felt an ardent attachment for you; hence I fled from the danger I could not brave; and had not those halcyon days been clouded by disappointment and affliction, time and absence would have again rendered me solicitous for your friendship and society. To a weak or misapprehending mind, any reference to past events might defeat the cause I wish to promote; but so often have we taken "sweet counsel together," and conversed on *all subjects* with the most implicit confidence, that I fearlessly speak as usual, and would fain, oh how sincerely, speak peace to you all my life! Can you then, my dear friend, give me the hope of becoming your protector and your husband? Every indulgence, every soothing care that the privileged tenderness of such endearing titles can promote, shall be your's. Mary, you know me well; you are acquainted with all my former follies, with the trials and disappointments of

my early life; and, alas! you also know they were, generally speaking, brought on by my own misconduct; and you have evinced an interest in that reformation which has rendered my mind at peace with God and with the world. I am past the age of romance—nor can I risk to affront you by one unmeaning compliment; but even since writing these lines, I have paused at my own comparative unworthiness with the dear being whom I am addressing. You never experienced those remorseful feelings so inseparable from a guilty conscience: you could look up to Heaven in the day of trial, and say, 'Thy will be done;' and I think I should have loved you less, had you felt differently for the loss which Heaven permitted it should be your fate to sustain.

"Had I in early life met with such a being as yourself! But on this subject silence is the decorous tribute which should be paid to the memory of my young Ellinor's misguided mother. We are, dearest Mary, though under different circumstances, bereaved of our first cherished hopes! Oh let us join both hand and heart to devote our future lives to each other's happiness! and thus, whilst the bright beam of religious faith shall illumine our uncertain path,

endeavour by our good works to glorify the Father of mercies. How fatally am I now convinced that without this sacred compact in the marriage state, no permanent happiness can be expected; and how equally am I convinced, that short is the reign of passion, if not consecrated by the best affections of the heart. I would not say too much, and feel at this instant that all expression is vain, to convince you how much I love and esteem you.

"WILLOUGHBY COVENTRY."

When Miss Brudenel received the above letter, she was making one of her accustomed visits at Beech Park. Whilst breaking the seal, she exclaimed to Mrs. Vincent, "this is from your faithless brother, who I suppose is pleading professional business to prevent him from dining at my father's to day." She perused the letter with tolerable composure, and then said,—"Impossible!"

"What is so impossible, my dear Mary?" Mrs. Vincent asked.

"Read the letter, for indeed it will be the best explanation of my assertion."

"Poor Willoughby! but you surely will not so hastily decide his fate."

"Oh my dear friend, what a return could such a heartless being as myself make, for his noble and generous feelings!"

"Mary, I conjure you not to throw away years of probable happiness."

"Happiness!"

"Comparative happiness,—then, let it be; the great and important change in my brother's character, bespeaks the fate of the woman he marries; he has long loved you, and truly estimates the amiable qualities you possess;—he expects not the romantic enthusiasm of sixteen, but looks forward to the blessing of a rational and confiding companion in the varied scenes of life; he has felt for you in affliction, nor breathed till this day one hope or wish, that the most scrupulous friendship could not authorize; his age, for he is some years your senior, his professional fame and success, his experience of the falsity of those enjoyments that spring not from rectitude, virtue, and religion; all afford you the fairest chance for that domestic peace, which is so often transient, from being differently founded. Far be it however for me to persuade you, if you feel a repugnance to Willoughby."

"Repugnance," Miss Brudenel interrupted, "that is too harsh an expression; your brother's

society has long been my solace and consolation, and through life I only wish a continuance of that mutual and friendly regard with which he has ever appeared to be satisfied."

"In our first girlish intercourse, had you made so silly and unmeaning a speech, from my having been considerably the elder, I should probably have chided you with serious reprehension; and therefore, it is not likely, that I can now let it pass without saying, there is a degree of selfishness in it; not caring how you increase the misery of a hopeless attachment in another, whilst you can be flattered and soothed by its continuance, terming the coldness of your own esteem, the regard of friendship."

"You do not judge me fairly, I am taken by surprise; I could not fail to believe that your brother highly esteemed me, but that his attachment was so serious and long founded, never entered my imagination. How can I answer this letter?"

"Do nothing rashly; but indeed Willoughby must not now be trifled with; after due consideration, either give him hope, or honestly and candidly tell him, he has not sufficient power to influence you to change your situation. I am so tenderly attached to Willoughby, and so fer-

vently wish him happy, that there are few events would afford me more heartfelt satisfaction, than, that you should become his wife.—— But here comes my darling child, do observe, Mary, how sweetly, yet playfully she is talking to her husband,—Oh what a trial, to part with such a girl! Who would believe there was such a disparity in their age;—I declare he looks almost as young as she does!" Mrs. Vincent hoped to subdue the agitation of her friend's mind, by turning for a minute, the current of her ideas; but their conference being necessarily interrupted, Miss Brudenel left the room, and in the solitude of her own apartment reasoned herself into a more composed state of mind, and even determined, not to give a hasty negative to Willoughby's honourable proposals.

Notwithstanding her deliberation, and Mrs. Vincent's rational counsel, the negative was given; and Willoughby for some months shunned her society, and consequently could not be as usual domesticated with his family and friends; pleading the press of business, in order that Miss Brudenel should not voluntarily absent herself from Beech Park. To all Mrs. Vincent's reasoning, in favour of her brother, she would only answer,—"If I had a heart to be-

stow, how gladly would I unite my fate with such a man; but, is it wise, or just to deceive him, by a semblance of that undivided affection, with which alone a delicate mind can be satisfied?"

How often in the course of human life the most apparently trifling occurrences lead to important events. Willoughby had lately in the course of his profession saved Mr. Brudenel from some serious pecuniary losses, and as the latter was confined to the house by a fit of the gout, Willoughby felt obliged to consult him personally on the business. He there saw and witnessed Miss Brudenel's unwearied attentions on a suffering parent; and one day peculiar danger being apprehended, she was obliged to receive Willoughby alone, to give him some newly discovered papers, which materially concerned the subject in question. The day was sultry, and a threatened storm soon inundated the roads, whilst the most awful thunder and dangerous lightning might have appalled the stoutest heart.

Willoughby arose to go,—he was about to order his horse.

"You surely will not brave this storm, Willoughby," Miss Brudenel said.

His answer led to other questions, and other answers, and he still lingered in the room; when a tremendous crash of thunder, accompanied by a ball of electric fluid, which passed near the house, and damaged a chimney in its progress, so completely overcame Miss Brudenel's agitated mind, that she would have fallen upon the ground in nearly an insensible state, if Willoughby's arm had not supported her. Willoughby well knew how little she gave way to the weakness of feminine cowardice, and that the awful conflict of the heavens had frequently excited their mutual reverence and wonder; but he could not be surprised that with a mind and frame worn by a long attendance on the couch of suffering, she should thus have helplessly sunk under the feelings, which such a terrific storm was calculated to alarm.

She recovered sufficiently to listen to every endearing epithet which affection could utter, —and "why, Oh why, dear Mary, should we ever part?"—led to a conference which might be tedious in detail, but ended in a mutual good understanding between the parties themselves; the one avowing his unalterable regard and affection, and the other acknowledging, that, if the tenderest friendship, and her whole life

spent in the endeavour to promote his happiness, could satisfy, and be equivalent for his long tried partiality; she would no longer wish to have him banished from her presence. Mr. and Mrs. Brudenel were of course apprized of the conference as soon as the invalid could attend to the interesting communication, and Willoughby had hailed the retreating storm in the natural world, as the blessed harbinger of a future happy calm, during the remnant of his life.

CHAPTER XXV.

When Ellinor was informed of the change in Miss Brudenel's sentiments, she was wild with joy and youthful anticipation of her dear papa's probable happiness; and laughing and crying in a breath, she exclaimed, "How often have I wished for this delightful event!—and I am so glad, though we are going to live in another house, that it is in this neighbourhood."

Mr. Harcourt had advised a more suitable establishment for the heiress of his friend. Ellinor had been very anxious in the native generosity of her heart, to provide properly for Mrs. Onslow, and liberally, even to the division of half her fortune, for the infant. The first suggestion was of course attended to; but all anxiety for the infant's future welfare was soon at an end,—the child died; and the mother appearing more temperate in her conduct, was placed above dependence, and resided with her aunt for two or three years, and then married again, and became a farmer's wife.

In a few months Willoughby and Miss Brudenel were united; nor was he through life disappointed of his rational hopes of domestic happiness, but ever termed it, "The richest bounty of indulgent heaven." Lady Osborn was, soon after her sister's marriage, more reasonable in her conduct: among the number of the self-elected preachers, many, though misguided, were sincere in their professions and consistent in their practice; humble, abstemious, and suffering persecution, "for righteousness sake;" but of late, a man of imposing manners, and gifted with that peculiar style of eloquence which extempore declamation sometimes excites, had joined in the conventicle service; and Lady Osborn was ever one of his enraptured hearers. A few godly meetings led to something like intimacy; and this specious condemner of worldly goods, and of the luxuries of life, began to think it was possible to possess, what his heart really coveted, namely,—the establishment and the fortune of his fair and deluded hearer. He therefore spoke of godly love,—of spiritual holiness,—of minds in unison;—of prayer, of fasting,—of that faith which the elect could only be saved by,—and in all the inconsistency of his professional jargon, talked of

being led by the spirit to endeavour to induce his now surprised and indignant hearer to admit of his addresses. Lady Osborn repulsed him him with contempt; for to do her justice, her spiritual enthusiasm was not feigned, and she would have thought it a degradation to listen to human vows of love from the same lips which had so often poured forth the effusions (as she considered them) of heavenly counsel. In a few days this adventurer (for he was nothing more,) absconded, taking with him some property with which he had been entrusted; and village rumour of his unprincipled character and conduct was soon confirmed by some shocking instances of depravity. The presumption and hypocrisy of this man, dwelt much upon Lady Osborn's mind; her judicious sister acted on the occasion with kindness and prudence, and an apparently chance conference with Mr. Donavan, wherein his mild and liberal opinions were most conspicuous, induced her to listen again and again to his arguments; which, with an increasing intimacy with his young and amiable wife, encouraged the hope, that time and patience would lead her to the real knowledge of truth.

The attachment between Mr. Donavan and

Lord Charles, continued through life; and as he had ever sought to combine in his character the scholar, the gentleman, and the Christian, he had the happiness to see him adorn the station he was destined to fill, with honour, reputation, and rectitude. Lord Charles remained faithful to his boyish attachment to Ellinor; the prospect of so desirable a match on both sides, could not be objected to; and the youthful lover's first misery was, the fear that Ellinor's beauty and fortune would draw around her a crowd of admirers, and cause her to forget her early playmate and protector. But, as it is not often the case when an eligible union is projected by friends and relatives, Ellinor's partiality "grew with her growth," and she even avowed in the day he was permitted to declare himself her lover, that she had envied the supposed happy Elizabeth, when Lord Charles's prepossession was anticipated.

Elizabeth never had reason to repent being the wife of Donavan,—her youth, her innocence, her judgment beyond her years;—the cultivation and the accomplishments of her mind,—and above all, that innate piety and preference of devoting an allotted portion of time and attention

to the practice of every species of benevolence, —endeared her as a companion, and promoted a due assimilation of pursuits, and of intellectual recreations: nay, he was sometimes struck with a wonderful coincidence of mind and manners, with the object of his early affections; nor did the interesting observation render Elizabeth less dear to his once deeply wounded feelings. In all the unrestrained confidence of her affectionate heart, she would often declare, that it required the utmost extent of resolution and divine assistance, not to consider such a husband the idol of her affections, instead of her mortal helpmate, which he had once emphatically styled himself: but it is justice to add, that the pardonable enthusiasm of her feelings, never interfered with her filial love and reverence; considering the society of her parents and other relatives as necessary to complete her happiness.

Willoughby through life maintained the respectable character of husband and friend, and practised all its endearing charities in their fullest extent. Some time after his marriage, the conclusion of a letter to Mr. Donavan (on some occasional absence from home) ran thus:—

"I have now given you a faint outline of all my concerns, both foreign and domestic; the

fairest prospects seem to open to my view. Ellinor's future marriage and establishment will, I trust, extend the circle of our domestic felicity; for if the possession of fortune, and the attachment of such a being as you have contributed to form, is to be her happy lot, what would the utmost height of presumption wish for more!—Oh, my best and earliest friend, what do I not owe to you, under the blessing of God, for the momentous change in my heart and principles! When I review my former self, agitated by feverish hopes, led astray by worldly temptations, and generally disappointed, by having unwarrantably yielded to their influence:—When I consider the vacillation of my late opinions on the most important subjects that can interest the mind of man; that the purity of religion was imagined of little import, whilst in the possession of youth, and health, and strength; and, that the fear of the world's censure was often opposed to the judgment of God;—I cannot sufficiently estimate the various mercies I subsequently experienced, in the hour of danger and on the bed of suffering.—Had I been then called to my long and last account!—nature shudders at the supposition, and the sceptic may ridicule in vain, the horrors of death, or the certainty

of judgment. But to you I need not recapitulate past events,—far more grateful to my feelings is the confession of the peace I now enjoy; and though too prone to the errors of humanity, I am blest with the conviction, that there is a never-failing remedy for all our infirmities. My inestimable wife is indeed 'heaven's last best gift,' and I now feel domestic happiness to be our Paradise below; for this short absence from home convinces me, (had I wanted a proof,) that man's best solace under all the vicissitudes of life, is the smile or sympathy of woman,—and a well ordered home his reward and refuge from every species of anxiety or fatigue. An accidental meeting with Trelawny supplied to me a striking contrast of the above assertion; and yet you may well remember, this was the man I once thought worthy of my sister. He married for fortune,—the ill matched pair soon parted by mutual consent, and Trelawny plunged into all the fashionable follies and vices that could distinguish the worldling and the sceptic. But for a trifling occurrence, I should scarcely have recognised this once gallant, gay Lothario. Premature old age and infirmity seem to be leading him to the grave; and which, even on his own conviction, appears to be more a subject of

thoughtless ridicule than serious apprehension.

"Oh what madness it is, to stake our existence in eternal happiness, to barter away the hopes of salvation, for the imaginary pleasures of a world like this!—a world which as formed and supported by our great Creator, not only throws in our way its vices and temptations, but also offers in contrast, all the rational enjoyments fitted for intellectual and dependent beings. And yet, Donavan, how frequently have human admonition, serious warnings, and unworthy examples, failed to wean me from the thoughtless career I was once pursuing,—failed to convince me that to be ashamed of the past without enjoying the present, or looking with better hopes to the future, must ever prove the wretched lot of an unstable and dissipated character. I can only attribute the renewal of my mind to comparative holiness, and to the never-failing mercy of God; I can never too often repeat, that it is my firm conviction, no Reformation can be permanent, that is founded solely on deism, on unassisted human repentance, or on man's presumptuous resolutions."

The letter finished with some less important

subjects; and Willoughby continued through life an exemplary instance, that stability of conduct, and rectitude of principle, are ensured only by the PRACTICAL INFLUENCE OF RELIGION.

THE END.

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